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The Hand of Mercy

THE HAND OF MERCY

"For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."—*St. Matthew*, vii. 8.

The Hand of Mercy

BY

REV. RICHARD W. ALEXANDER,
Author of "A Missionary's Note-Book," etc.

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

REV. WALTER ELLIOTT, C.S.P.

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NEW YORK
P. J. KENEDY & SONS
Printers to the Holy Apostolic See
1914

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FOREWORD.

THESE narratives of the journey from darkness to light are the fruit of zeal for souls, for in writing them the author was inspired with a desire of extending God's kingdom. They were called *stories* when first printed, because they were thrown into an orderly shape for clearness' sake, and also to give room for a modest and wholly justifiable setting of conversation and scene. They are, one and all, a true report of the events and the processes of thought leading to reception into the Church. Indeed some of them might be likened to the work of a conscientious interviewer of the public press.

The moment they began to appear—most of them in the *Missionary* magazine—they were unanimously hailed as an advance upon previous brief narratives of the sort, a more vivid exhibit of facts, and a superior literary force. They are a perfect mingling of the outward and inward itinerary from error to truth.

Catholics everywhere took them up as their chart of exploration into the realms of enquiry among their non-Catholic friends. They have been fruitful of many, very many, conversions. As to earnest seekers after truth, the reading of the graphic, realistic, sympathetic, and often very pathetic narratives, has given the signal for the last step or the first step toward the light. No Catholic who has read them is so humdrum as not to experience a deepening of love for Christ and His Church, a quickening of zeal, a stimulant at least to the duty of praying for conversions. The feelings attached to holy faith are stirred to delightful activity, and the sequel is the doing of something for making converts, saying something, giving good books, watching the mental states of outside friends for good opportunities. Whosoever reads these "tales"—where all the persons are real, all events have actually happened, all inner crises have, in awful reality, existed—must envy the convert-maker his noble vocation, and in God's due time be also led to strive for souls. Not a few have already emulated Father Alexander in recording in this style the workings of divine grace.

As in all real life so in that of traversing

the border-land between error and truth, there is an infinitude of variety. No two of the conversions here recorded are alike or nearly alike. Anything so divine as conversions must be immune from monotony. Therefore there is a perpetual charm of novelty in this book in spite of its dealing with the same points of departure and of arriving, the pilgrimage on the same well-trodden road to Catholicity. Every class of life, from the penitent cleansed of utter filth to the soul of guileless youth, from the millionaire in his palace to the pauper in the almshouse, is here introduced in typical cases of conversion. The author's opportunities for acquiring the facts have been exceedingly fortunate, and a poetical temperament—so many times manifested in the atmosphere breathed upon the narratives, has aided in clothing these records with exquisite literary beauty.

Experience proves that converts make the best convert-makers. St. Paul's standard appeal to the Jews was the story of his own conversion, linked to that of the rejection of his Master by His own people. Reading of battles makes soldiers. Reading these struggles against prejudice, self-interest, vicious tendencies, cruelty of family and

friends, struggles of heroes often ended by a miraculous victory, makes converts and trains convert-makers.

And how well done they are, how beautifully done! How true the fancy that clothes the events and sets forth the actors in these dramas of most real existence: a fancy that is the many-colored livery of the Holy Spirit. May the same Holy Spirit spread this volume far and wide, and long continue to guide its author in collecting and publishing other such narratives!

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THE HAND OF MERCY

THE HAND OF MERCY.

DURING the past summer I had the privilege of meeting a brother priest, whose delightful personality and high culture, as well as unobtrusive goodness, impressed me in a most striking manner. He was one whose words carried conviction in the simplest conversation, and I had many delightful chats with him the week we spent together. Our talk turned one evening on the mercy of God toward sinners and the value of intercessory prayer.

At this point he stopped with a smile.

"I should like to tell you of an experience of mine," he said, "but it is so unusual and so liable to be disbelieved by many, that I very rarely mention it. Of its truth, however, I am as firmly convinced as I am of the fact that we are sitting here together."

Needless to say that I urged him strongly

to continue, and after some hesitancy he consented, with this remark:

"I know, Father Alexander, that you will find it extraordinary: but I want to state in the most emphatic manner that it is entirely true, and there are at least three living who will testify to the circumstances having occurred."

"All things are possible where God's mercy to sinners is involved," I replied. "You make me more anxious to hear the circumstance."

"Well, then," he answered, "here it is, with no embellishments—only the simple facts. It happened about two years ago. Unusually fatigued one evening, after a busy day's work in my pastoral duties, I retired about ten o'clock. I fell into a sound sleep. Suddenly I was awakened by a knock at my door. I sat up, wide awake. It was repeated, and I called out: 'Come in.' There was a light in the room, somewhat dim, but distinct enough to see the young man who entered, closed the door behind him, and turned toward me. I recognized him as a young friend of mine who was studying for the priesthood. I had not seen him for six months, but knew he was at the Seminary, and a most pious and fervent fellow.

"I noticed his extreme paleness, and it occurred to me that he had come late to town, arrived at the house and, disturbing no one, came directly to my room.

"I was partly prepared for the remark which followed:

" 'Father, I want to go to confession.'

" 'All right,' I said, and I sprang up, slipped into my cassock and took my stole.

"There was a small kneeling bench, or prie-dieu, and a chair close by, and I motioned him toward them. As I seated myself I looked him full in the face. It seemed that the resemblance to the young cleric I mentioned came and went, puzzling me not a little.

"I heard his confession, gave him absolution, and, although the whole circumstance was unusual, coming at night to my room and at that hour, I said nothing more and dismissed him with the usual 'God bless you.' As he closed the door I heard the clock in the hallway strike two; its tones were unusually vibrant. I looked at my watch; it also pointed to two o'clock.

"I sought my pillow and fell asleep immediately. I rose at my usual hour, and said my Mass with no thought of the oc-

currence. Shortly after breakfast I met one of the other priests.

"'It was unfortunate about that sick call,' he said.

"'What about it?' I remarked.

"'Why, the poor fellow was dead when we got there.'

"I looked at him.

"'Who was it?' I asked.

"'Mr. X———; he died of gastritis in twelve hours. He is the brother of young X——— who is studying for the priesthood in our Seminary. I am afraid he was a hard case, too, poor fellow.'

"'What time did the call come?'

"'Between one and two o'clock this morning.'

"Instantly my experience, or whatever you wish to call it, came to mind. I told the circumstance to my brother-priest, also that I thought it was the young cleric himself who came to my room. He was astonished. 'He never ceases to pray for that brother, who is rather wild,' he said. 'But, Father, you had better go to the house and verify your experience.'

"I went to the house and paid a visit of condolence to the family. They brought me to the remains. When I looked at the dead

face of the young man, I recognized my penitent of the night before—the puzzling resemblance to the young cleric was explained.

"'Oh, Father! if he only had had the priest!' was the cry of the sorrowing mother; 'his brother, who is studying for the priesthood, prayed for him day and night. He knew he was a little wild!'

"And then the tender fulness of God's mercy broke upon me, and I realized that the prayers of the young Levite who had offered himself to the service of the altar had obtained the grace of conversion and reconciliation with God for the brother who had passed away.

"'Do not weep,' I said to the mother. 'God has been merciful to your son's soul. I feel sure his brother's prayers have won his salvation.'

"'Oh, Father, do you think so?' was the cry.

"'I do,' I said fervently.

"The vision of that white face in the night, and the memory of the absolution I had pronounced, passed before me. My heart grew full of a sentiment of awe and gratitude to which I could not give words.

"But I left that mother comforted."

* * * * *

There was silence for a moment as the Father finished his story, and a great reverence and confidence in God's mercy rose up in my own soul. To me there was nothing strange in it. I felt that it was true.

"MY BOY."

IT was a sad call the Humane Society's Agent had that day—a call to an alley, in a poor, but quite respectable neighborhood. A woman, lonely, self-supporting, but reserved as to her own affairs, had died in a little room, high up in a tenement house.

There was unfinished fine needlework on a table near by; every appearance of respectability and even taste, in the meager furnishings of her poor room; and the mark of gentle blood in the delicately cut features of the little orphaned boy who sat terrified in a corner, at a distance from the bed on which his dead mother lay. His face was set, and his brown curly hair lay uncombed on his forehead. His eyes were red with weeping, and his chin rested in his hands as he leaned his elbows on his knees and stared at everything with the look of one who had never before seen death.

"That's the boy," whispered a neighbor, "he doesn't understand. He is only six years old, you know. The only child."

"Come here, my boy," said the Humane Society's Agent.

The boy rose slowly, and came over to the Agent, who reached out his hand. The small fingers were laid in it, and the blue, swimming eyes looked steadily into the man's kind face.

"Mother's dead," said the child, solemnly. "She hated to leave me alone. I have nobody now."

The sweet voice, the neglected look of the little lad, went strangely to the Agent's heart.

"What is your name, my boy?" asked he.

"Arthur Maxwell, and I'm six years old; and father is dead, too. I—" he added, as if a fresh sorrow had made its way back to his memory.

The Humane Society's Agent was a kind man. His duty had not hardened him. He was strangely drawn to the little fellow, who showed marks of gentle training and better days.

"Would you like to come with me to night? It is lonely here for a boy. I'll bring you back to see mother tomorrow."

For answer the small chap threw his arms around Mr. Benjamin Brown's neck, and the Humane Society's Agent felt a throb of gen-

uine love stir his heart as he pressed him close, and thrilled with the joy of the soft cheek laid against his own.

"Will you come, Arthur?"

"Sure!" said Arthur, smiles breaking into the blue eyes as he wiped away the tears on his sleeve, and took possession of his new friend's hand. The two or three women who were present nodded their approval. Mr. Brown said a few words about the funeral, finding there was not a single friend or relative to step forward to bury the poor woman, who had evidently worn out her life trying to prolong that of her little son and to keep them both from the charity of the city.

Mr. Brown learned, too, that Mrs. Maxwell was a Catholic, and although he was a staunch Presbyterian, he did not hesitate to give orders that she should be buried in the Catholic cemetery with all the ceremonies of the Church. In fact he called on the parish priest himself to see that this was done. He found out that Arthur was the only child of his mother, who had come to poverty no one knew how. She had not been long in the locality, and was evidently well born and well bred; this was further evidenced by the papers she left behind, among which were her marriage certificate and the records of the

boy's birth, and his baptism in an English Catholic church six years before. The priest inquired keenly about the Humane Society's intention relating to the boy.

Mr. Benjamin Brown frankly acknowledged he had designs himself on the little lad.

"You see, Father," he said, "I am a bachelor, but I have lost my heart for the first time in my life, and it is to *that* boy! I want him—I want to adopt him and give him a home and make him happy."

"But," said the priest, "how will you do that? Don't you live in bachelor's apartments?"

"I do," said Mr. Brown. "Still I want that boy!"

"But you can't take him there," responded the priest. "It would be out of the question, Mr. Brown. To be sure he has no one to claim him at present, but no Society would approve of his going to you under the circumstances. Don't you see it yourself?"

"I want that boy," said Mr. Brown. "I want to care for him, educate him, give him a college course and a start in life, and you must tell me how to secure him, Father. I tell you I have lost my heart to him."

The priest could not help smiling at his earnestness.

"Really, Mr. Brown, you deserve to have him since you are so attached to him. I know of one way. Take him to the Catholic Orphans' home, and place him formally in the care of the good Sisters, with the understanding that as soon as he is able to go to college you will be at liberty to send him. But it must be a Catholic college—remember that. The boy's parents were Catholics, and he is a baptized member of the Catholic Church. His mother died in my parish, and I am bound to see to this. You would not want to tamper with his religion, would you?"

"Never, Father," said the man. "I'm square, if I'm anything. I will take your advice. You will give me a letter to the Home, will you not?"

"Most certainly," said the priest.

So it happened. When Arthur's mother was laid in her lonely grave, the little lad was taken to the Orphans' Home by Mr. Brown. It cost poor Arthur, who had grown to love his benefactor, many bitter tears when he heard he was to leave him, and almost stabbed the heart of Mr. Brown. But the good Sisters opened their arms and hearts to the sobbing boy.

"Don't cry, Arthur," said Mr. Brown. "Be a man! I'll come to see you Sunday,

and bring you a train of cars and a picture book."

Arthur brightened up.

"Will you? A *really* train of cars, with a choo-choo, and a cowcatcher, and a bell?"

"Yes, all that, and a big book."

"Hooray!" said Arthur, smiling. "Hurry up Sunday, Uncle Ben; hurry up!" And leaving him still smiling and waving his hand, Mr. Brown departed, relieved, yet wishing he had some way of keeping this small bit of sunshine nearer to himself.

He was as good as his word. On Sunday he arrived at the "Home" with a large parcel, in which were the picture book and the train of cars. Arthur was radiant. He was neatly dressed, his curls brushed, and his eyes were like stars. He was happy and had a thousand things to tell his "Uncle Ben." The coveted parcel was examined, and it was good to see the little fellow's delight.

So it went on, Sunday after Sunday, for six long years. The boy grew a sturdy fellow. yet ever gentle and devoted to his "Uncle Ben." He knew no other name for him. The Sisters reported him remarkably pious and religious for a boy. And now, in his twelfth year, "Uncle Ben," whose love for the boy

had never diminished, looked for a college in which he might begin his course.

"It must be a Catholic college," he mused. "I gave my word to the priest."

We can judge from this what manner of honorable gentleman was Mr. Brown. So it came to pass that Arthur was sent to a Southern college under the care of a great religious order, his beloved "Uncle Ben" defraying all the expenses of his wardrobe and tuition.

The years passed on. Arthur was a grateful boy. His letters, sent regularly, were the one great joy of his so-called Uncle Ben, who watched his progress with pride and hope. Now and then Arthur would speak of his happiness in his faith, and in fervent words would express the wish that his benefactor knew something of the one true religion. But Uncle Ben would only shrug his shoulders and say: "It is enough for me to be a good Presbyterian."

Arthur's graduation day came. Uncle Ben was there, proud of his boy. There was something noble and pure, and altogether inscrutable in the appearance of the young man —something that rather awed Uncle Ben, he could hardly say why. After the exercises Arthur and his benefactor took a walk under

the college trees. Uncle Ben praised him for his fine record. Then came the question:

"What do you want to make of yourself, my son?"

Arthur paused. Placing his hand on the arm of his adopted father, he looked him straight in the face, while his eyes brimmed with unshed tears.

"Uncle Ben, a lifetime would be too short to thank you for all you have done for me. My heart swells when I think of your noble, generous goodness. I can never, never repay you."

"Tut, tut," said Uncle Ben, hastily, but deeply touched. "Don't say that. You have been a reward in yourself, Arthur. My greatest joy in life these fourteen years has been your affection, your gratitude, and your success; but your real life is ahead of you. What shall it be?"

"Uncle Ben," said the young man solemnly, "day and night have I thought of it these two years past. It is no hasty notion. I may disappoint you, for you cannot look upon it as I do; I shall be a priest of God, and pray for your conversion."

Mr. Brown became ghastly pale, stared at him, and then sank down upon a bench near by, without a word.

We cannot portray the scene that followed. It was continued the next day, and it was long before Arthur obtained permission to follow his desire. He won, however, and although his heart bled at the wound he gave his benefactor, he was strangely exultant. It was decided he should remain and go into the Seminary. A pale, broken looking old man wrung his hand in silence a few days later, as he boarded the train going North, and Arthur noticed that he did not once look back.

* * * * *

That was some years ago. Yesterday—only yesterday—Mr. Brown called to see me. He had a photograph in his hand.

"Father Alexander," said he, with a note of pride in his voice; "I want to show you my boy, Arthur. He was ordained a priest last Saturday and said his first Mass on Sunday, and said it for me; and he has sent me his photograph."

I looked at the photograph; it showed a tall, slender figure, with the pure eyes, open face, and Roman collar of the young priest. It was good to look at. I told him so, and his gratified flush assured me that my praise was music to his ears.

"You may be proud of him, Mr. Brown,"

I continued. "And he said his first Mass for you? There is no danger of your remaining out of the Catholic Church long now. Get ready to come in."

He smiled. "I guess you are about right, Father, though I've held out a good while. It broke me all up when he wanted to be a priest. I have got over that now, and I am glad. I have seen a good deal of your cloth, Father, in my position, and the Catholic priest is God's noblest work. I honor him. Won't you give me a book to read? I want to know what your Church teaches."

I gave him "The Faith of Our Fathers." He promised to read it.

He will come back, reader. I ask your prayers that it may be soon. Uniting with the prayers of his adopted son we may be sure that heaven will not delay the moment of grace for this good man, who has glorified his life by his noble and unselfish kindness to a desolate orphan boy.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

"DOMINUS EST!"

THE white-capped nurses of the great hospital in the city's suburbs had assembled in their auditorium for the evening lecture, which was always given by some noted specialist. Among them was a slender girl, who had put on the neat uniform of the probationer that very day. She was tall, with clear, fair complexion, abundant auburn hair, and earnest dark blue eyes. She had moved about all day like one in a dream; silently performed, with all her soul, the various tasks assigned her, and one could see that her heart was in her work.

In the afternoon the good nun who had charge of the training school placed some text-books before her, gave her an allotment of study, and asked her how she liked her work. The answer was enthusiastic.

"Why, madame, I love it!"

"I am very glad," said the nun; "but you must not call me 'madame,' you must say, 'Sister'!"

The girl flushed: "I beg your pardon,"

she said. "I never met religious ladies before, and I did not know how to address them. 'Sister' is a beautiful word, if it is not too familiar."

"We are sisters to the whole world," returned the nun, "and our work in the hospital brings us very close to the world; that is, the greater part of the world, for there is more suffering in it than pleasure!"

"It was this part of the work that attracted me," said the girl; "I do want to become useful to suffering people, and I mean to leave nothing undone to qualify myself thoroughly for the noble profession of a trained nurse."

"That sounds well," said the nun, "keep to that ideal, follow instructions, and you will attain your wish."

"I would like to ask a question," the girl faltered.

"And I will be glad to answer it," said the nun.

"You know I am not a Roman Catholic. Will I be permitted to worship God as I have been taught at home?"

"We never discuss religion in the training school," said the nun. "You are here to study medicine—the human body and its ills. Only, in case of a patient requesting a

nurse to bring a minister of religion, she reports to the head of the department, and then leaves the matter in her hands. The head of your department is myself, and I always shall be glad and ready to assist you in any doubtful matter. You are free to practice your own ideas of religion without remark or intrusion. And now, Miss Golden, here is the text of tonight's lecture. You will find it well to be prepared for Dr. G—."

Smiling, the nun pointed out the books, and left the girl to her studies. Stella bent her head over her book, and applied herself assiduously to her task. At the time of the lecture that first evening we find her seated with her class listening with rapt attention to the learned physician, who was one of the most eminent specialists of the day.

* * * * *

Two busy years passed by. Miss Golden saw many things in that Catholic hospital which opened new vistas of thought to her mind. Naturally reverent, she looked with admiration at the unselfish work of the Sisters who conducted the vast work of the Institution, envied their skill, and tried to acquire their self-control and calm readiness for emergencies. There was no change in her religious attitude—she rather prided herself

on that fact. She seldom attended any services in the hospital chapel. Her love of beauty, however, impelled her occasionally to go to Benediction. She loved the flower-decked altar, the singing of the nuns, the reverent attitude of those who prayed, and she bowed with them when the little silver bell announced the Benediction. A sweet, restful peace stole over her soul at these moments, and she found herself saying: "I wish *I* could believe that God was there!"

In the discharge of her duties Nurse Golden saw how weak were human supports when pain or sickness racked the frame. How sad were the deaths of those who had no hope beyond the grave! How terrifying were the last moments of those who had placed themselves beyond spiritual assistance!

No one ever brought up the subject of religion, but she observed everything. The girl had a heart that yearned for a living faith—for a peace of soul that should abide with her and help her, when her time came, to die like some of the poor Catholic patients: who looked with the all-seeing eyes of the spirit into the great Beyond, and saw there everlasting joy, and the beauty of God and His saints. She was faithful to her work, to the duties of her profession, and had already

begun to look forward to the future that would open to her after her graduation. And according to her light she prayed.

One day a Catholic patient who was under her care received the Holy Viaticum. Nurse Golden arranged, as she had been taught, the white pillows and counterpane, the little table with its crucifix, candles, holy water, etc., beside the bed. She left the room while a priest, attended by a nun, administered the Holy Sacrament, and when he passed back again to the chapel she returned to the bedside to extinguish the candles and remove the table. The patient's eyes were closed, the face was full of rapt devotion. Nurse Golden looked at her, deeply impressed. Then, moving lightly around the bed she disarranged the counterpane, and from one of the heavy folds there fell Something, snow-white and round, that fluttered to the polished floor beneath the bed.

A strange tremor seized the nurse. She gazed on the little white Object. It drew her, and scarce knowing what she was doing, she fell on her knees and gently picked up the Sacred Host with her fingers.

Hardly had she laid It in the palm of her hand when a marvelous thrill passed through her soul, and with it—*Faith.* It was the

Lord! She knew it. Nothing now could change that belief. *She knew it.*

Then instantly came a fear;

"I should never have touched It!"

Hastily she arose, opened a chest of drawers in the room, and laid the Sacred Host on a pile of clean, snow-white linen.

Hurriedly, and with strange thrills quivering through her body, she glanced at the patient, who had not moved, and then went swiftly to a Catholic nurse who stood at the medicine press outside.

"I have touched the Lord!" she whispered, her face tense and her eyes glowing: "He is in there still!"

The Catholic nurse stared at her. Was Nurse Golden out of her mind? What on earth was wrong? Sometimes the poor nurses were over excited and exhausted in their strenuous life, and became feverish.

Then Nurse Golden explained—the words rushing from her eager lips. The Catholic girl drew back in terror.

"Why, Miss Golden!" she said in awed tones. "You should not have dared to touch the Blessed Sacrament! Oh, let me go at once for Sister!"

Nurse Golden stood in the doorway, her eyes fixed on the dresser, her heart throbbing

wildly. In a very few moments the chaplain came hurrying down the corridor, and accosted her excitedly.

"What is this I hear, Miss Golden? You lifted the Blessed Sacrament from the floor? And you a Protestant? You, who do not believe in the Blessed Sacrament?"

"I believe now, Father! I know. I have touched the Lord!" she said.

She fell on her knees, and pointed to the dresser. The priest opened the drawer—there lay the Sacred Particle. His face flushed. He took the stole from his pocket, placed it around his neck, lifted the linen towel on which the Particle reposed, and silently and reverently carried It with downcast eyes to the chapel.

There was subdued excitement among the nurses and Sisters when Miss Golden explained her act, and what followed it in her soul. And there was more excitement when the chaplain declared he had placed only one Host in the small pyx, and that he was positively sure of the matter. Again and again he reiterated this assertion, and held to it in spite of the ventured suggestions of others, that there might have been two Particles.

"Impossible in this case," he said: "I had only one communicant, and I brought only

one Host. I am positively certain of this fact. Nothing could convince me to the contrary."

"Where did the other Host come from?"

No answer came to this oft-repeated question. But Miss Golden asked to be instructed in the Catholic faith, was baptized, and in time made her first holy Communion. Her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was intense. She could hardly speak of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist without tears. The miraculous answer to the question was her conversion—the only member of her entire family a Catholic. She continued her course in the training school, graduated with honor, saw that a successful future was awaiting her, and with the good wishes of all, she left the hospital.

* * * * *

Five years passed away. It was Easter Monday morning. Sunlight filtered through the stained glass windows of a well known convent chapel, and lay in glory on the tall lilies that bent toward the Holy of holies. Mass was going on, and the sweet voices of the nun-choir trembled on the fragrant air. How beautiful are the words:

"Regnum mundi et omnem ornatum saeculi contempsi! contempsi! (*The kingdom of the*

world, and its pleasures, I have despised—I have despised," for the sake of Our Lord.)

A single voice was singing now:

"Quem vidi, quem amavi—(*"Whom I have seen, Whom I have loved."*) And from the center of the marble nave a veiled figure rose from her knees, and advanced to the foot of the altar.

A group of vested clergy surrounded the crimson-robed celebrant as he turned to her, and holding up the white Host that once had thrilled her to the very core of her being, paused. In the breathless hush came the clear sweet voice:

"In the name of Our Lord and Saviour, I Sister Estelle of the Blessed Sacrament, vow and promise to God, Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, Perseverance."

Could one mistake the voice? Could one mistake the slender figure, the pale, spiritualized face? There was rapture in the tone—a note of triumph in the sweet words of immolation.

* * * * *

Happy Nurse Golden! What sweeter Lover could have enthralled you? What more precious chains than the vows could have fettered you? What safer home than *"the cleft of the rock, the hollow places of*

the wall'' figuratively spoken in the Scriptures of the cloister, where the white dove of the chosen soul may fold its wings, close to the Tabernacle forever?

Aye, forever! He shall fold you in His arms until the day declines and the shadows fall, and then there will meet you the virgin band, who follow the Lamb through all eternity.

"JAMES IGNATIUS."

A True Story.

"WELL, James Ignatius, how do you feel this morning?" said the cheery voice of the great surgeon, as he stopped at a little white bed in the children's ward of a certain hospital.

"Fine, doctor! Ready for a prize fight!" said a sweet boy-voice, and a pale, spiritual boy-face from its white pillow smiled a weak greeting.

Gruff Dr. Storm always stopped at James Ignatius' bed. He had been head surgeon at the hospital for a number of years, and for four of those years he had passed the bed of little James Ignatius daily. The nurses said (and so did the staff) that James Ignatius was the only one who had the inside track of the doctor's heart. If they dared, his medical brethren would have teased the iron man about his favorite, but no one could with impunity be merry with the doctor. He was like a bronze statue—interested in none

of the amenities of life, but an authority in his profession. To see him in his surgeon's white gown handling a scalpel, touching the human body with the sure, delicate touch of certain knowledge, laying his slender, steel-like fingers on muscle and tissue, vein and bone with the artistry of a master, was a sight his fellow-surgeons hung upon with the delight of enthusiasts.

James Ignatius had been long in his hands —a bright little lad, full of grit and endurance, who smiled when his blood was flowing, and who looked upon Dr. Storm as an archangel in human form, because, although he had not been able to twist his crooked spine into shape for walking, he had given him the use of his hands, and had dulled the pain from which he had never known a minute's freedom since he remembered anything in all his thirteen years of life.

Dr. Storm despised pet names. At the beginning the nurses called his patient "poor little Jim." Then came the first operation, when the lad was obliged to feel the knife without an anesthetic, and the doctor, even with a woman's gentleness, had to hurt him sorely.

The lad, with great drops of sweat standing out on his pale face, smiled bravely and

cried out, in a boy's language, "Bully for you, doctor! you know how to hurt a fellow!" The ghost of a smile circled the set faces surrounding the operating table, even in Dr. Storm's eye appeared the shadow of a twinkle. After that the doctor always called him James.

The boy liked it, and when the good Bishop came to the ward one day, wearing his golden miter and carrying his crozier, and confirmed a number of the patients, James asked to have "Ignatius" added to his name.

"You see," the little fellow explained, "he was a soldier and he had to lie in bed like me, for weeks with a bad leg, and he never growled. I want to be a soldier like him!" And so after his Confirmation day he would answer to no name but "James Ignatius."

There was an innate purity and refinement of soul in this little crippled lad that shone on his remarkable face. Every one who looked at him once looked again. He had delicate, but masculine features. His broad forehead was crowned by chestnut hair, cut short. His eyes were large and blue; nose and chin were strongly chiseled, but the mouth was sweetness itself. No one could see

James Ignatius smile without relaxing, and his laugh was so musical and ringing that it was contagious.

He lay in bed quietly, except when the nurse picked him up and placed him in a large reclining chair and wheeled him to the window, whence he could see the hills and the country in the distance. He had a keen appreciation of the beautiful, and with the precocity so often met with in afflicted children he had a maturity of mind beyond his years.

Reading was his favorite occupation—reading far in advance of his age. Scott, Shakespeare, the New Testament, à Kempis. It was amazing to see these volumes in his transparent fingers, and to hear James Ignatius talk about his favorite chapters. Often Dr. Storm and he would have a passage-at-arms on the reading of the day, and the doctor would be stirred to wonder at the boy's cleverness and mental development. To James Ignatius this strong-faced doctor, with his six feet of height, his firm hands, his gruff voice, was an object of adoration. The great blue eyes kindled with unmistakable lovelight whenever the doctor approached him.

The day Dr. Storm did not speak when he passed James Ignatius' bed was a day of

languor and drooping for the little lad, and by degrees the doctor came to know it and to fall under its spell. James Ignatius found there was a gentler tone for him, a thrill in the firm handclasp, even a smile on the cast-iron face, which fact evoked all the love and hero-worship of his boy-heart.

At last as he grew slowly worse, and the doctor sat by his side, finger on his pulse, the boy broke through the crust of the repressed heart of the man, and confidences flowed from one to the other! The old, old story of human love—that great, calm, beautiful, peerless love called friendship!

James Ignatius told the doctor how hard it had been for him to see other boys leaping and romping over the hills at out-door sports, and asked him why God had decreed it so. And Dr. Storm, falling back on his long-forgotten Catholic instruction in years gone by, told him that Providence was always right, no matter what it seemed like—easy or hard. And James Ignatius asked the doctor if that was his religion! For once in his life Dr. Storm lost the incisive, crisp speech that was so characteristic of him. His faltering was not unnoticed by James Ignatius.

"Doctor," he said, "do you think God

troubles Himself much about a poor little boy like me? Nobody cares for me but Him, and yet——"

The tone went to the man's heart and stirred the depths of his strong nature.

"Don't you think I care for you, James Ignatius? Am I not your friend?"

The blood rushed to the boy's pale face. Great tears stood in the blue eyes. He took one hand of the doctor between both of his and impulsively kissed it. Silence fell between them, a silence that was eloquent to both, for both understood. The great scientist, with his fertile brain, his vast learning, and his starved heart, and the frail boy, lonely and suffering, were glorified in this seemingly unequal, strange, yet entirely comprehended friendship.

Oh! Friendship, how sweet thou art! Let the heart but once, in its long years of throbbing, find thee in thy beauty and thy strength, be it in man or woman or child, is it not a glimpse of lost Eden? What is the mad ecstacy of love in its brief passion to the white blossom of a friend's devotion—to the tenderness of a friend's hand-clasp, to the sweetness of a friend's affectionate words? Blessed is he who has found a friend—bands of steel are not strong enough to

clasp him to one's self or hold him to one's soul forever!

And Dr. Storm, with that closed and barred heart that had never unlocked to man or woman, found himself melting before the worshipful love of a little child!

James Ignatius told him how great and good he seemed to him; what power he had to heal, and how close he must be to the great God who created all things, when he could handle the flesh and bone of his fellows, and make whole those who were maimed.

"But, James Ignatius, I haven't made you whole yet, and I fear I never can," said Dr. Storm.

"I don't count, doctor," said James Ignatius. "I never was straight or whole, like other boys. I would have to be *made* over again! I am of no use."

"Yes—you—are!" said the doctor. "You have more grit and more patience than half the men in this hospital. I often say to some of them when they whimper, 'You ought to see James Ignatius suffer!' "

The boy's transparent skin was suffused with a delicate flush at the doctor's praise. Such words rarely fell from his lips.

"I don't see any use of complaining,"

said he. "You help me a heap, doctor, and when I suffer the most I say: 'Lord, I'll suffer all you send me if you keep suffering away from my good doctor'."

"Do you really say that, boy?"

"Every day, doctor. I tell the Lord I'm willing to bear every pain and ache that comes if He doesn't send any to you!"

And then Dr. Storm remembered his perfect health these past years, and wondered if James Ignatius' prayers had anything to do with it. He was silent so long that the boy feared he was offended, and so expressed himself.

"Offended? Good heavens, boy! how could I be? I was thinking that you had perhaps been saying my prayers before the Lord all these years. I have never had a minute's pain, and never had a minute's time to pray for myself."

"Oh, doctor! do you never pray?"

"Not much, my son."

"And how do you expect God to take care of you?"

The question was incisive, and the doctor flinched before the clear blue eyes. His religion was his profession, and it was true that his knees rarely bent in prayer. He felt reproved.

James Ignatius slipped his thin little hand into the firm, strong one of the doctor and said:

"I'll ask God to let all your kind deeds to people be your prayers, and then I'll pray more and more that your life may be good and happy. But, doctor, you must speak to Him yourself sometimes. He will always hear you!"

The doctor rose hastily and said his time was up—but he smiled his rare smile into the eyes of the boy, like a flash of light from behind a storm cloud. James Ignatius lay still and thought. Could it be possible that his idolized doctor never prayed to Our Lord, and to His sweet, spotless Mother, whom he loved so much? Impossible! And then he slipped his hands under the covers and with closed eyes said his rosary for Dr. Storm, while the nurse tip-toed past and thought he slept.

Dr. Storm's heart became like wax in the hands of James Ignatius. He did not know how it came about, but he found himself telling him of his early life, of his struggles, of his bitter experiences, of the death of all he loved, his gradual cynicism and absorption of his soul by his profession. To all of which James Ignatius listened gravely, never by

a wrong word jarring on his mood. And in the few minutes' talk of every day by that little bed the strong man found the simple old faith of his childhood and the beliefs of his youth.

James Ignatius brought him back to God, and the great surgeon learned again how to pray from the guileless yet stern admonitions of the dying lad.

Yes, the crippled boy was dying now. All the resources of science had proved vain and useless, and Dr. Storm confessed himself vanquished as he looked at the thin face and saw the light of the blessed vision in the eyes of the patient-martyr.

It was Holy Week. In the days that succeeded Palm Sunday James Ignatius grew worse. Dr. Storm was sterner than usual, more unsmiling, as such men are when their hearts are stirred. His short visits to the little fellow's bed became more frequent, and on Holy Thursday morning he left word that a wine glass of milk and stimulant should be given to James Ignatius every three hours. The boy had no inclination to talk to any one but to Dr. Storm, though a faint little smile always appeared when any one did a kind act for him.

Another lad who was a patient in the ward

often sat by his bed, and thus relieved the nurse when she went elsewhere. James Ignatius shared his dainties with this little chum, Dickie, who was not blest with much wisdom or wit, and who greedily accepted all the good things that came his way. He had given him everything eatable that kind friends had sent him during Holy Week, and Dickie quietly carried everything away to a certain hiding-place, where he secretly devoured them at leisure. Oranges, bon-bons, fruits of all kinds disappeared, and the nurse flattered herself that James Ignatius would never perish of starvation, at least. James Ignatius said nothing when he saw his gifts appropriated, and it goes without saying, neither did Dickie!

The good priest who attended him and gave him the last Sacraments had laid particular stress on the fact that it was Holy Week, and when he gave him Holy Viaticum spoke touchingly afterwards of our dear Lord's sufferings on Good Friday —His agony on the cross, His sufferings for poor sinners, for those who never prayed, and who would not be benefited by His death! The words clung to the memory of James Ignatius. If he could fast from all food on Good Friday, and, unit-

ing with the suffering Saviour, ask Him, dying, to bless Dr. Storm for all his goodness to a poor little boy that was crippled and of no use to any one! His generous soul sprang to the thought! He did not realize his weakness; he did not know it would hasten his death! The spirit of an apostle burned within him, and the single desire of saving the doctor's soul dominated his whole being. Hence when the glass of stimulant and milk was offered him every three hours he would simply say, "Put it down, nurse; I'll wait a minute," and when her back was turned he beckoned to Dickie, who swallowed it with one gulp.

Weaker and weaker he grew—but was he not fasting like his dear Lord, to save a soul? Dr. Storm came in several times that Good Friday morning, his heart torn at the pinched look of the sweet little boy-face. He could not understand the increasing weakness of James Ignatius, in spite of the constant stimulation. He spoke to the nurse, he saw the empty wine glass, but he never dreamed of questioning vacant-faced Dickie, who sat unmoved at the foot of the bed, in apparent patience and devotion.

Good Friday was passing. James Ignatius had tasted nothing all day. Nature could

hold out no longer, and at one o'clock it was apparent that the little fellow was in his agony. The priest came to his bedside and found Dr. Storm seated there, fingers on pulse, watching the life ebbing from the one creature who had found a way to his hungry heart. The big blue eyes of the dying boy, fixed on his friend's face, still held the love that animated him when he offered fasting and pain for the doctor's conversion.

As the clock struck three the change came. The doctor did not stir, but he saw between the spasms the lips of James Ignatius move, and, stooping low, he caught the words, disjointed and trembling:

"Dear—doctor—I f-f-asted for—your—soul—like Jesus—did on Good—Friday!"

And then, with an expression of ineffable sweetness, the tortured body gave up its white soul, and paradise opened to poor, crippled James Ignatius!

The doctor rose with a face as white as marble. He pressed the eyelids shut, laid the thin little hands on the breast and turned away. With an intuition that was almost like a revelation he saw the whole tragedy: James Ignatius had starved to death for his salvation. He turned to Dickie, who was

wailing loudly. One glance made the boy cower.

"Did you take his medicine?"

"It was only milk and stuff!" wailed Dickie; "and he gave it to me every time!"

"Well, you killed him—that's all!" said Dr. Storm in a voice of thunder, and strode out of the ward.

He locked himself in his room. On his knees the great surgeon wept as few men weep, and registered a vow that the sacrifice of James Ignatius should have its recompense. The grandeur and beauty of the little cripple's soul, the wonder of his love, the greatness of his Good Friday offering again and again overwhelmed him. He prayed with all his being, and as he prayed he felt the gentle spirit of the boy hovering near, bringing him strength and purpose. Dr. Storm arose a new man—a fervent Catholic Christian!

* * * * *

James Ignatius was buried with Solemn High Mass. The mourners were but two—poor, simple Dickie and Dr. Storm.

A MOTHER'S MEMORY.

NOT long after the beginning of my ministry—very many years ago, as you may suppose—I was visiting a brother priest in Baltimore.

He asked me to help him in the confessional during a busy season, and I consented.

"Many of my people are negroes," he said, "but I think you will not be sorry for that when you make friends with them in the box."

"Negroes!" I said. "I have yet to discover their fervor. They are very emotional."

"Not overmuch!" he replied. "They love to sing—but so do the angels, for that matter! Given fair instruction they are fine, reliable Catholics. I have no discount to make in comparing them with the whites. To be sure, they are a subject race, despised by many whites, often feared and detested. Others patronize them, spoil them, laugh at their foibles, and forget their striking qualities. But taken all in all they are good peo-

ple, submissive, and, religiously considered, are the fairest prospect for our Catholic missionary field, second to none!"

So we chatted about the blacks and their spiritual and other traits until far into the night, incidentally comparing notes about their social and domestic qualities, and even those intellectual ones which cross their religious state.

The work in the confessional, always consoling, was especially so with the negro-penitents that time. It seemed to me I had the "lion's share" of them! In fact, few others came to me. I revelled in their simplicity and sincerity, I was heartsick at the sidelights of misery that were revealed.

One evening I had heard the last confession, and was about to leave the box when, glancing between the curtains after my last penitent had gone, I saw a man rise in the middle of the church. He looked toward me, and doubtless noted that the last benches were empty for he left the pew, made a genuflection, and started toward me.

Bending the knee was evidently new to him, for it was anything but rubrical, but I could not help noticing a peculiar grace in his reverence to the altar. I watched him. He was under the full glare of the large cen-

tral chandelier as he stepped along the middle aisle. I know a handsomely built man when I see one, and that negro, black as my cassock, was an ebony Apollo! Tall, well-knit, with a fine head and broad shoulders, the swing of his body was full of elasticity and grace. It seemed to me he was about twenty-five years old, becomingly and neatly but not stylishly clad. As he advanced, he kept his face turned toward my corner and I saw that his features were almost regular for a negro, and wore an expression that was grave almost to dignity.

He halted squarely in front of me, for I had drawn back the curtains of my box, and looked at me with a half smile of expectancy and reverence, as if wishing me to say the first word.

"My son, do you want to go to confession?" I said.

"Most suttingly, suh, I do for a fac' suh, but I hardly know how to go 'bout it, suh."

His voice was remarkably sweet and deep, his accent strongly African, but I will not venture to reproduce his dialect entirely, which I afterwards found was that of the Cotton Belt.

I stepped out of the confessional, shook hands with my bashful penitent, and invited

him into the sacristy, for I saw he needed some instruction on the method of making his confession and no doubt on other points of our holy Faith. When I gave him a chair, and placed him at his ease by a few kindly words, I asked him to tell me all about himself.

"My name," said he, in his soft Southern tones, "is Jefferson Stewart. I was born in the City of Baltimore. My mother was tall, very dark, and very strong. I was her only child. My father died before I knew him. My mammy often talked of him, and when she said her prayers, with me kneeling at her side, she always made me say, 'God rest my father's soul, Amen.' Three times I had to say that. And I can look back even to my third year and mind the tears trickling down her face. But suh" (I had quite a time making him call me "Father," he evidently thought it too familiar and hence disrespectful) "but, suh, I mean Father, many and many a time my good mammy took me to this very church, and brought me to that railing out there, and made me say over and over, out loud, my childish prayers, while she fixed her eyes on the altar and seemed to see God! Then when I stopped for want of something else to say, suh, she would turn to me and whisper: 'God is right heah,

Jefferson! He's a-lookin' from that little Doah down into youh little heart!' and I would tremble lest the good God saw something there He didn't like. Again she would say, as we stood at the foot of this church: 'Jefferson, chile, look around at dis grand House of God! In dis heah church yuh father and me was married, and heah you was baptized a little, po' baby! You was baptised a Cath'lic heah, a true Roman Cath'lic, and doan you nebber forget it, and, if any nasty Meth'dists or Baptists ask you to jine their 'ligion when you git growed up, tell 'em you are a Cath'lic, a Roman Cath'lic, and that's the only 'ligion that's God's.' "

* * * * *

I suppressed a smile at the epithet my black man bestowed on our non-Catholic brethren, but he did not see me in his fervor. Then I asked him about his prayers—did he remember them?

Yes!

His mother (it was always his mother) taught them to him. And then, like a little child, this tall, fine fellow went on his knees and said the "Our Father," "Hail Mary" and "Creed," with numberless little mistakes, which he repeated like a little boy when I corrected them.

I cannot forget his simple fervor and his intense religion. Then he sat down again.

"My mammy, suh, was a free woman, Father," he began, "and always carried in an oilcloth purse in her bosom a printed paper with her name on it, her free-papers as she called them. I have seen her show them to the constables who sometimes stopped her on the streets.

"She had to work hard, and scrubbed and cleaned a number of offices. We lived with a colored Catholic family, in an alley full of our people. I often went with my mother when she was out working. One of her offices was along the waterfront, and one evening while she was working at her sweeping she sent me for some sand to strew on the floor. It was a summer day, and I went over to a pile of sand that lay heaped up near the river. Mother knew the black man who watched there and told me he would give me some in a can. I got the sand, carried it to her, and ran back to talk to the man.

"I found a black boy of my own age, and we began playing tag out on the long wharf where several schooners lay moored on the river. A man soon began loosening some ropes on one of the vessels and as we passed he called to us. He was a low-browed, evil-

looking man—a white man, of course. When he saw us he shouted:

"'Here, you youngsters, get aboard and help to haul this rope in, and I'll give you each a penny.'

"We raced each other to see who should be first to take up his offer, and I thought how proud I should be to give my mother my first earnings that evening! So we jumped aboard, and were instantly caught up by two other fellows, carried down below, locked in a room, and told we would be killed if we made the least noise. We huddled together, shivering in speechless terror. Soon we heard the rushing back and forth of hurried feet overhead and felt the upward and downward motion of the boat. We were afloat and going, God knew where!

"Oh, how we wept in that dark room! Oh, how my heart broke to think of my mother, my poor, dear mammy, hunting for me, her lost boy, her only boy, never to see me again!"

He stopped, overcome. The pathos in that negro's voice would have put to shame the tenderest, deepest feeling expressed by a cultivated white man, and I felt my heart swell in sympathy, for I knew he was telling the truth. He went on:

"Soon everything was quiet, and we poor little darkies put our arms around each other and wept ourselves asleep. When it was daylight we were taken on deck, given something to eat, and found ourselves sweeping out to the ocean.

"We were taken to Charleston and there sold at auction to different planters. I remember my purchaser before he bid for me thrusting his fingers into my mouth, bending all my joints, trying my eyes, my teeth, my hearing. One man bid a hundred and fifty dollars, but I was sold at last for two hundred and twenty-five dollars, and was delivered over to this buyer. I was now a slave! I did not dare resist, but went passively wherever I was told.

"How lonely I was, living in the silent country with three hundred slaves, toiling from dawn to dark. How I pitied them with their strange ways, their poor cabins, their wild stories and their religion! How different from Baltimore! And, oh, how I pined for my poor mother!

"I never saw her again.

"Almost the first thing that happened was a dispute about me. The family I was sold to was half Methodist and half Baptist, the

father holding to the Methodists, the mother to the Baptists.

"They argued hot and strong with each other to possess me for their religion. They quoted the Bible—lots of it. The bigger children laughed, but took neither side. Now I was a bold little darkey, and I waited for a lull in the dispute. I wanted my chance, for my dear mother's words were ringing in my ears.

"At last there was a moment's quiet. I mustered up all my courage and stood in my bare feet and my little shirt and pants, my hands in my pockets, and called out: 'The Methodists and Baptists are both nasty. I am a Roman Cath'lic, that's what I am! It's God's only true religion!'

"When I got through, and before they got over their surprise I thought I had better say it again, because it didn't sound loud enough the first time. So I planted my feet firmly and fairly yelled out my good mammy's words. And, suh, I felt them deep down in my heart, and I would have said them if those people killed me, as indeed I thought they would! Not at all, suh. First they stared, and glared at me, but I stared back. Then two of the big girls giggled, and the children laughed, and after a while the old

folks laughed, and there was a shout all around.

"They made me tell them all I knew. I said my prayers three times over during my story. I told them how I was stolen, and about my poor mother, and I think my mistress was kind-hearted, for she said: 'You poor little nigger, no one shall touch you!'

"I never had any real trouble after that day about religion. The people were good enough to me—but I had hard work, and I often hankered after my mother, and never forgot my prayers. When they wanted me to go to camp meeting I said 'No' so fierce that they let me alone. You see, Father, it was my mother's words! She had stamped them on my heart, and although I knew not one thing about Cath'lics, I knew *she* was right, and anything different was wrong. So I stuck to my mother. When I was grown I took up with a fine girl, but she was so savage a Baptist that I quit her. I never saw a Cath'lic, never heard of any in reach. I have been a working man all my life, and always poor.

"After the war I was free, so I went to a lighter in a little cotton port, and got a chance of working my passage to Baltimore. My whole heart was set on getting to Baltimore

and finding my mother. I got here a week ago, Father. I began to hunt for my mother, but" (here his voice broke and his big chest heaved; he couldn't go on for a few moments) "everything is changed. I couldn't find anything as I remembered them in the docks, the streets, or the alleys. I found an old auntie who remembered my name when I told her. She took me by the two hands and looked up into my face while she cried: 'You? Jefferson Stewart! You? Yes, indeedy, I 'members you' pooh mother, my child. Your mother broke her heart and died when she couldn't find you! She pined and pined, and when the priest cum to her poor bed an gib her de Blessed Saviour, I was there, an' she turned to me and says: "Rachel, if ever you meet my poor boy on this earth, tell him his mother watches over him day and night"— and den that night she died! I don't know where they buried her, for it was the war times and such things was done in a hurry.'

"It was a hard blow, Father, a hard blow! I could only bow my head and take it. But then I thought I must get to the church my mother loved and be a good Cath'lic, for that's all I can do to please her. I had a lot of trouble finding this church. It is much changed, but here I am. When I saw you out

there in that box I wanted to speak to you, and ask you to help me to be a good Cath'lic like my mother, so that I can see her some day in heaven. Will you help me, Father?''

* * * * *

Need I tell you my answer? My heart went out to that child-hearted, big, black man! I saw how the grace of God had come to him through that poor, old, hard-working mother. Her teachings, her influence had guarded his life and shaped his pathway to me, and I gave him all I could of instruction and assistance day after day until I left him a true, fervent, practical Catholic! Where he is now I know not, but I firmly believe that his life is one that his mother in heaven is not ashamed of.

Oh, Christian mothers of the present generation, do you thus impress piety and faith on your children?

Learn a lesson from this lowly negro mother and her stalwart son.

THE FAITHFUL FRIEND

DURING THE NIGHT.

NOT long ago, passing through an Eastern city, I visited a priest of my acquaintance. I was asked to wait a little while, and as my business was not important, I picked up a book on the table of his study, and was soon absorbed in it. He entered the room shortly, and apologized for his delay, but I waived the apology, knowing that a priest is always busy in the service of the Master, and needs no excuse. I noticed, however, that he seemed pale and somewhat nervous, and remarked the fact, adding that it was Sunday evening, and no doubt the day had been unusually strenuous. As for myself I was about to take the train for a distant city, and wanted to have a pleasant chat with my friend as I passed near his vicinity. I had two hours before train time.

"You are right, Father Alexander," he said, "I have had a very strenuous day! It began at two o'clock this Sunday morning, and lasted straight along till Vespers this afternoon!"

"'Since two o'clock this morning?'' I echoed in surprise.

"Yes. I'll tell you all about it. I think I ought to give you my experience—some good may be done by the recital.''

"Do, Father,'' I said. "I really want to hear it.'' He settled back in his chair and began:

"I was late in the confessional last night (we always are on Saturday nights, thank God), and I was pretty tired; my head was scarcely on the pillow before I fell sound asleep. It only seemed a minute or two, until the telephone, which is right at the head of my bed, woke me up with a furious ring. I stretched out my arm and caught the receiver.

" 'Hello!' was the call—'are you Father So-and-So?'

" 'I am,' was the reply.

" 'Well, Father, this is the Municipal Hospital. We have a terribly sad case here, a fallen Catholic. She is going to die—and pretty soon—and the party who brought her told us she ought to see the priest. It's such a sad case we could not help calling you up, although the time of night is unearthly. She will not live much longer.'

" 'Why didn't you call me earlier?' I said.

" 'Because she did not seem to be in danger. She has taken a sudden turn, and the doctor says she will only last a few hours. Will you come, Father?'

" 'Of course I'll come,' I said. I got into my clothes as fast as I could, took the holy oils, and went into the darkened church for the Blessed Sacrament, then started.

"Well, Father, it was the darkest night of the season. I was a little uneasy as I went my lonely way, but I had a 'Companion,' you know, hidden in my breast. I felt that I was about His business, and that He would protect me.

"I got to the hospital, where the lights were low and all was silence and as I passed the big hall clock it struck three! They knew me there. I had no need to speak, until I met the nurse who seemed to be waiting for me. She came over at once.

" 'Father,' she said, 'it is a case of acute scarlet fever. The girl cannot speak. She is an unfortunate. The elder woman who brought her here and paid for her liberally in advance said she was a Catholic. She also said that she often thought she suffered bitter remorse of conscience for her life. We did not think she was in danger until an hour ago.'

"'Let me see her,' I said in a low voice.

"The nurse went ahead, stopping suddenly before the door of a room.

"'You must go in here, Father, and put on the gown we wear where there is contagion. Everything is ready.'

"I had been there before; I divested myself of my coat, slipped on the white gown redolent of disinfectants, and putting my pyx case in the pocket of my breast and the stole around my neck, went out quickly.

"'There,' said the nurse; 'number 49.'

"I entered. The door was closed behind me. I saw a beautiful girl of about twenty-three, with long black hair tossed on the pillow. Her face was free from the eruption, but her throat and neck and arms were terribly inflamed. She opened her large brown eyes and scanned me as I approached her.

"'My child,' I said. 'I am a Catholic priest. I have come to help you to make your peace with God. See my stole!' and I lifted up the little violet stole I wore. As she recognized it a dreadful expression of horror passed over her face! She threw up her hands, a terrible sound came from her lips. She shook her head, and I saw that the demon of despair had possession of her. Oh,

Father! I determined that the devil of Judas should not have her!

"Inwardly calling on God's Mother, the pure Queen of heaven, I pleaded with the miserable creature. With all my heart I assured her of God's mercy—truly, if He had not intended to save her, He would not have sent me here. No use! She looked at me, and her great, terrified eyes had the agony of a lost soul—her lips uttering dreadful sounds that were not words! But there was no softening of the awful lines of her face. At last she flung herself against the wall, turning her back to me. I was desperate. I seized her by the arms and turned her toward me.

" 'You shall not be damned,' I cried. 'It is God's will to save you. Listen, poor child. It will be so easy. I will make your confession. You will answer with your eyes, your head, your hands. It is the evil spirit who tempts you! Come! God and His sweet Mother Mary, our blessed Lady, will help you. This is the May time—don't you remember?'

"I kept on in such words, with inward prayer all the time, until I saw the poor eyes soften. By degrees I felt that God's grace was winning the battle.

"She made her confession, Father. It was

hard work for us both, but when I gave her absolution the peace that settled on those contorted features made my eyes moist and my throat swell. I anointed her. I did not give her Holy Communion—she could not swallow. But the rest the Lord's mercy almost forced upon her! I had scarcely finished when I saw the awful gray shadow stealing over her face. I went to the door and called the nurse. She knelt down and I held the sacred pyx in my hand before the dying girl. She seemed to feel the presence of Jesus, for when the cold sweat was gathering on her forehead she opened her glazing eyes, and fixed them upon it. Her agony was terrible.

"When the end came at last her face settled into a look of such peace that again that choking feeling came. I thought how near she had been to the awful Abyss!

"'It is all over, Father,' whispered the nurse.

"I made the sign of the cross over the lifeless body and left the room. It was more than an hour since I had entered, and the strain was telling on me; the perspiration was standing in great beads on my forehead, I was shaking all over. I stood a moment wiping my brow, and pulling myself to-

gether, when I heard the sound of suppressed sobbing in a room close by. The door was ajar, and I felt impelled to enter. I saw two small beds, and upon them were stretched the gasping forms of three little children: a boy of about seven, a girl of five, and a baby (I knew not the sex), apparently about three. Kneeling on the floor between them was the mother, evidently, and from her came broken sobs.

"She felt my presence. Turning, she stretched out her arms in alarm over the little cots with an appealing gesture, like a mother-bird spreading wings of protection over a helpless nest of little ones, and looked at me with a startled gaze! When she saw over my white gown the stole which I had not removed, and the black guard which held my pyx case, a look of intense joy came into her face.

" 'A priest of God!' she cried. 'Oh thanks be to His holy Name!

"'Father,' she said, turning to me still on her knees, with a transfigured look on her tear-stained face; 'God has sent you! They are all dying of diphtheria—all I have —my little babies! These two are innocent, they will go in their baptismal robes! But my boy is seven! Give him absolution! He

has been to confession at home, Father—he is good, and he knows right from wrong. Thank God! I am satisfied now. I know all is right when the priest is here!'

" 'I will give the boy conditional absolution and anoint him,' I said—and I did so. Before I finished, the two little ones had died, and before I left the room, the boy had passed away. The poor mother closed their eyes, whispering 'Thank God' amidst her tears, and the nurses led her away as I went to change my clothes.

I was unnerved. The contrast between the two scenes was so great! There was that poor girl, God's mercy almost forced upon her, barely escaping an awful eternity. Here were those three innocent children, all the world to their heart-broken mother, and she was thanking God they were taken in their innocence! How little we know of the ways of the mighty God! The mother knew the babies were better off. She was a Catholic Christian. God's will was her will! What a lesson! But the other death-bed! Once that girl was innocent, too. Perhaps some fervent prayers on her First Communion day—perhaps the pursuing pleadings of a heart-broken mother—perhaps the memory of the celebration of Our Lady's month—a hundred

such seeming trifles had brought God's mercy to her erring soul! The mercy of God. Oh! it has no bounds. None can sound its height—its depth!

"When I got home after all this, I found it was nearly time for the six o'clock Mass. I said it, and tried to take a much needed rest. But those scenes were before me! I preached at the late Mass, and I made my sermon on my visit in the darkness of that early Sunday morning to the hospital. There was no need of other subject. I saw the people breathless in their attention. I saw them wipe the tears away. I knew they understood. After Mass, the sacristy was thronged with them.

"'Father!' they whispered, 'that poor girl! Won't you say Mass for her soul!' and they pressed their offerings upon me. Twenty-five dollars they left on the sacristy table for Masses for her soul!

"I thought how the dew of the Holy Sacrifice would penetrate her purgatory, and help her toward heaven, and I thought again of God's unspeakable love for His creatures! Oh! the love of God! the mercy of God! Is it not overwhelming?"

He stopped. We were both silent. There are moments of deep emotion that come into

our lives, when even an audible breath jars on the intensity! I arose as I glanced at my watch. I had barely time to make my train. I gave him my hand with an almost inaudible good-by, and we parted. But during the night as I lay in my berth, listening to the measured rhythm of the wheels on the steel tracks, the vivid narrative of my priestly friend came before me, and I saw in imagination the two death-beds in which he was God's minister and the archangel of His mercy! And this was the lesson: Can we ever doubt the goodness of our blessed Lord, or His love for those whom He has redeemed and paid for with His precious blood!

THE ONE WHO WAS SILENT.

STRANGE stories are told by hospital chaplains of God's astounding mercy to poor sinners. Almost without apparent reasons, souls that seemed beyond redemption are saved before one's eyes. Miracles of grace are enacted that make one thrill with awe and reverence, and the love of Christ for His creatures becomes at times so manifest that we fall on our knees, almost frightened in presence of the supernatural.

A brother priest, a friend of mine, is chaplain in one of the most prominent hospitals in the country. He had been there for many years and was a striking figure as day by day he went around the various wards and private apartments, doing God's blessed work in his gentle persuasive way. His hair was snow-white, but his figure was erect and well-knit, his clerical dress faultless, and he was most impressive in his manner of offering prayers. Many a one, listening to his deep sonorous voice, devoutly and slowly enunciating every sacred word, went away with his petitions

to God stamped on their souls—a help to their future perseverance.

One day I visited him in his apartments. He seemed so pre-occupied that I asked the cause.

"Well, Father Alexander," he said, "I am standing silent, as it were, before a case of God's wonderful mercy today.

"Downstairs, a man has been bed-ridden for some months. When he came to the hospital I tried to find out what religion he professed, or if he had any at all. He would not speak a word. He seemed impatient of my presence, and even turned away his head irritably when I went near him. After innumerable attempts to awaken his interest, I gave up the task, begging the Sisters, who never fail to elicit some signs of gratitude or appreciation, to find out something about this silent patient. They were unsuccessful. Even to the doctors this man barely replied in monosyllables—and soon was left severely alone, although every effort was still made for his comfort and assistance.

"Month after month passed by, but no impression was made on the poor fellow and at last his disease became so offensive that it was all one could do to stand for any length of time at his bedside. Again and

again he was spoken to about his soul. He never gave an answer or made any comment, no matter how impressive his visitor might be. After a while only a few words, or a prayer, with an aspiration, was said by those who could not bear to see him die without one word concerning his soul or the life to come.

"Six months had passed unavailingly, or so it appeared. The man seemed stolidly indifferent. Few had heard him speak.

"But this morning one of the nursing Sisters passed his room. Something impelled her to enter and give him a kindly greeting. Then she asked him if he wanted anything.

" 'Yes,' he said very distinctly. 'May I have a drink of water?'

" 'Certainly,' said the Sister. She at once went and returned with a glass of fresh water.

"He thanked her, and while she raised his head and assisted him to drink, she ventured to say, as he tried to swallow a little: 'How refreshing that water seems to be to you! That is the way baptism is to an immortal soul! Of course you have been baptized.'

" 'No,' said the sick man, 'I have never been baptized. I don't belong to any Church. If I did, I would belong to yours.'

"'Would you wish to be baptized a Catholic?' asked the Sister eagerly.

"'If I could I would,' he replied. 'No one ever asked me.'

"'Why, I thought you had been spoken to repeatedly about religion,' said the nun, amazed.

"'I didn't understand,' said he wearily.

"'But you understand now,' said she. 'You want to be baptized, so that you may reach heaven!'

"'Yes, that's what I want.'

"'Wait a minute,' said the Sister. She came quickly to my room and amazed me by telling me that No. 46 wanted to be baptized. I sprang to my feet, and stole in hand went to his room.

"In an instant I saw the shadow of death on his face.

"'You want to be baptized, my son?' I said. 'You believe all the Holy Catholic Church teaches?'

"'I want to be baptized. I do believe,' came distinctly from his lips.

"I seized the glass of water the Sister had brought him. It was nearly full. I poured it over his forehead, baptizing him in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost! As I said, 'Thanks be to God,'

and turned to the Sister, who was beside me with a towel in her hand, she said: 'Look, Father!'

"I turned to the bed; the man was gasping! In one second he was dead!"

"How long ago was that?" I asked.

"Less than an hour. And now, Father Alexander, can you tell me how that man received the grace of the Sacrament of Baptism, or how was it that the Lord's mercy lingered about him, refusing, as it were, to leave him until his soul was saved? These are the endless questions I ask myself as I minister day by day to the countless cases that come into this great hospital. What are the hidden causes of all these marvels?"

We were both silent. At last he said:

"Many wonders will be revealed at the Judgment Day! But the greatest of all will be the mercy of God."

THROUGH THE SACRED HEART.

SHE was an old lady of seventy, a convert for many years. I had known her for a long time, and held her in high esteem for her virtue, piety and intellectual gifts. She had hosts of friends and was an unusual personality, carrying her years like a queen, and her stately figure, with its shapely head crowned with abundant snow-white hair, gave gracious evidence of her age.

One day I said to her rather unexpectedly:

"Madame Thirza, you have never told me the circumstances of your conversion. You know I am always on the lookout for marvels of grace that might instruct and edify others. I know the world is full of them if we only looked about us. God's hand is not shortened, nor is His heart less loving as time rolls on. Do tell me what made you a Catholic."

A faint blush overspread her venerable yet delicate features, and it seemed to me her eyes grew moist and tender. She said:

"You are right, Father Alexander. His heart never grows less loving. God was very good to me, and I will tell you all about it.

"Fifty years ago I was a bride, a happy girl of twenty. My husband was a nominal Catholic and I was a strict Baptist. I don't know how we ever grew to be so fond of each other, but we were a most devoted couple until his death. My husband never spoke of religion, and at that time took such matters very lightly. I was distressed at this, and after a while I ventured to take him to task for it, as he never went to church; I even tried to bring him over to my way of worshipping God. I wanted him to become a Baptist, a church member. He did not seem to understand me for a while, but when it broke on him he gave a hearty laugh in the most disconcerting manner, and, taking both my hands in his, he looked me straight in the face and said:

"'Why, little girl, don't you know it is as impossible for a Catholic to change his faith and be sincere as it is for him to change his color? There is only *one* true faith, little wife, as there is only *one* sun, and although I am a bad Catholic (God forgive me!), I never could be of any other religion.'

"These words made a deep impression on

me. If there were only *one* true faith, was I quite sure it was *my* faith? My husband, careless and easy as he was, had the most profound conviction that the Catholic religion was the only real religion. If he were right (and I never knew him to make a mistake in matters of thought or intelligence), why should I not try at least to find out something about that religion, and if there were flaws in it, which would be very apparent to a disinterested party (so I thought in my ignorance), I could argue a little about it.

"I was really in earnest, and being of a religious turn of mind, and very anxious to convert my husband, I determined to go into the enemy's camp and look around for myself. I was trembling at the thought of meeting the 'Scarlet Woman of Popery,' but I loved my husband dearly and hoped I was striving for his soul.

"My husband was a traveling man, and often was absent for two or three months at a time. This was hard for us both, but we consoled ourselves with the hope of better things ere long, and as he wrote me every few days without fail, and told me where to address my letters, looking for the mail became my most engrossing occupation. Until, one night, I had a strange dream.

"My husband had been away two weeks, and I received his letters regularly. In the last he wrote some closing phrase which told me that his faith, though crusted over by the distractions of the world, was still there, undying and strong. All day I thought of his words. I forgot what they were exactly, but that night I had a strange dream.

"I seemed to be wandering alone in a dark cavern. I touched the rocks on either side; they were cold and rough. The passage was narrow, the path was uneven. I was continually stumbling. I walked on blindly, getting more and more weary at every step, wondering when I would reach the end. I had some vague idea it was my soul's destiny, and that I was going through earth's pilgrimage to God, but the cavern seemed interminable; my hands were sore and bleeding from the rough walls of rock I was obliged to feel on each side in the darkness, and my feet were aching and burning.

"Suddenly the thought flashed through my tired brain: 'Am I on the right road?' I seemed to have set out bravely, fully convinced I would reach my destination, but now I was almost exhausted. In my dream I fell on my knees with my arms outstretched and prayed aloud: 'Oh Lord, give me light to

know the right path!' Suddenly a great brilliancy suffused the far distance. I saw a cross in the midst of it, and beneath it as it were on some high mountain, a noble edifice. Standing in front of it was a glorious and beautiful Figure, with eyes that pierced my very soul. One hand pointed to His breast, which seemed to be a quivering mass of living light; the other hand pointed to the cross-crowned edifice. I tried to spring forward, but fell on my face and awoke.

"I need not tell you the impression that dream had on me. I was not in the least superstitious, nor, as a usual thing, bothered by the foolish vagaries of sleep; but I was haunted day and night by the vivid picture that was revealed to me as I knelt with outstretched arms in that dark cave and cried to the Saviour for light. I did not dare to tell that dream to any one. It seemed too sacred to gossip about. I would not tell my minister, and I could not write it to my husband.

"One day I was shopping, and passed the door of a Catholic church. It was in the heart of the busy city—the only Catholic church of prominence in the district. It is now torn down, but even when I pass the site I bow my head. I glanced at the open doorway, and with a guilty feeling I entered.

It was a vast aisle of gloom. The Gothic arches lost themselves in vagueness, the altar looked far, far away, and the church seemed deserted save for a few bowed forms that did not pay the slightest attention to anything around them. I advanced half-way up the aisle and stood doubting and trembling. I had never been in such a place before. I was drawn onward by an invisible force. I saw a crimson star flickering, trembling in space. I followed it, and stood beneath it. I found it was a richly decorated lamp suspended from the roof. I looked around, half frightened at my temerity. I was standing before a long, low railing that extended across the church. Suddenly a figure robed in black, with a peculiar square cap, came from a door within the railed space. He raised his cap as he knelt before what I now know is the altar. I stood terrified lest he should recognize me as an intruder and order me out of the place. I felt I deserved it.

"But he arose, and, coming to the railing, courteously asked me in a low voice if he could serve me in any way. I think my embarrassment told him I was an outsider, for when I answered hesitatingly, he asked me if I would not come to the house. I dared not refuse, but followed him bewil-

dered, and only recovered breath when I was ushered into a neatly-furnished little parlor, where I was courteously handed a chair. The priest had asked no questions, and now looked at me benevolently, waiting for me to speak. I hardly know how it happened, but I raised my eyes and saw on the wall a picture of the Saviour with one hand on His breast, the other extended. My dream rose up before me, and I cried out to the priest, pointing to the picture: 'Oh, sir, what does that mean?'

"In a few words he explained the meaning of the Sacred Heart. I told him my dream. My heart was unlocked. I gave voice to all my doubts, all my desire to explain away my husband's faith, and, in fact, made an entire confession of everything that was in my heart and on my mind, ending with the unaccountable impulse to enter the church as I passed that day. He listened patiently and gravely.

"'I knew you were not a Catholic when first I saw you, my child,' he said, 'and I cannot but believe that God has special designs for you. We won't discuss that today—but, since you are so anxious to convert your husband, I will give you a book to read—a book that will tell you everything

that Catholics believe, and, in fact, their whole religion. It won't take you long to read it. If you desire any explanations I am nearly always at home in the afternoons, and I place myself at your service.'

"Saying this, he arose and took a small paper volume from a bookcase and handed it to me. It was a 'Little Catechism.' I thanked him as I rose to depart, gave him my address, and left his house with such a feeling of peace and serenity that I felt like singing aloud for joy. I had no wish to become a Catholic. I was only delighted to think I had actually spoken to a minister of my husband's religion and he did not denounce my desire to convert him.

"When I went home I took the first opportunity to read the little book. I was amazed at its simplicity and reasonableness, and then at its tone of conviction, at its clear decision, at its self-evident statements —facts that only needed thought and unprejudiced judgment to affirm their certainty. I finished the little book at one sitting. Again I read it, and it was not long before I had to yield to its truth.

"The days passed. My husband's letters came regularly. Everything went on as usual, but within my soul it was as if a new

world had burst upon my vision. When my husband returned for a two-weeks' rest, he noticed a change, an unaccountable something, but I was determined to hold my peace until I could tell him all.

"Six months went by; my husband had gone again, and in the meantime I had visited my friend, the good priest, and was being instructed in the faith. I will not tire you, Father Alexander, by going into further details, but the next time my husband came home I asked him to take a walk one evening. We went, to his astonishment, to the rectory, where my good father and instructor was waiting, and while my husband stood dumb in surprise he announced that I was to be baptized conditionally next day; that I was to make my First Holy Communion the following Sunday. And then I said to my husband:

"'Will you not come with me?'

"He was overcome, but before we left the house he had promised. He kept his promise. We received Holy Communion together, and until his death he never failed in the practice of his religion. He died like a saint, after a long, weary illness. A nun, the teacher of my children, knelt at his bedside saying the prayers for his departing

soul, and when he passed away she closed his eyes and said to us as we wept there:

"'Do not sorrow; he is with God.'

"That was many years ago, Father, but my faith has never faltered; my dream has been realized. I found the light through the love of the Sacred Heart."

ZULIEMA.

A True Story of Darkest Africa.

IT WAS an unusually pleasant day in the island of Zanzibar, and one of the young officers of the British Army, in garrison on the coast, determined to get a boat, sail to the mainland, and spend the day hunting. He got his guns together, and employed one of the natives to row him across.

Cautiously they entered the bush. They had not proceeded far when they heard through the gloom of the tropical foliage the unmistakable growling and yelping of jackals and hyenas. The officer caught the yellow sheen of their round, vicious eyes, and fired several times. They heard the patter of swift flying feet and the yelps dying away in the distance, before he and his native ventured to push on.

When they penetrated a little farther into the bush they found several of the animals dead, and one or two disabled. But to their amazement, they saw that there was a rough

canvas sack in the midst of the dead wild beasts. It was tied securely at one end, and evidently had been dragged out of the earth, which was excavated for a foot or two, as if intended for a grave. The sack seemed to move. The officer, cutting the string from the end, disclosed the warm body of a young child, a girl of about eleven or twelve years old. It was doubled up in the sack like so much carrion. When the air touched the body, especially the face, convulsive twitching showed that life was still present. The officer and the native tried to restore consciousness, and were rewarded by seeing the girl's eyes open, look at them wonderingly, and then close. The little form was so emaciated that it was barely skin and bone, and utterly helpless. The officer could get little satisfaction from the native, and stood bewildered, not knowing what to do. Suddenly a sweet-toned bell pealed in the distance, and the native said the sound came from the house of the Sisters who took care of poor children. The information was an immense relief to the officer, who ordered the native to take up the little black skeleton in his arms, and they made their way toward the sound of the bell, which was still pealing the mid-day Angelus.

It was Christmas Eve, and the convent was in a state of preparation for the midnight Mass. The little black children were in great excitement, carrying articles to the chapel, and cleaning up the various living rooms, while the nuns in their dark habits and white veils were superintending affairs in all directions. That night the class of good children who had been under probation for a year, and had been thoroughly instructed in the Catholic Faith, were to be baptized, and then they were to begin their preparation for the reception of the other Sacraments. The devoted women who had given up home and associations most precious to Catholic hearts, and had come into these wild, equatorial regions for the love of souls, enduring all sorts of terrible hardships to win the African children to Christ, had established there a sort of orphanage and school. They received with open arms the wretched creature that was brought to them. The young officer was astonished that no questions were asked, no fee mentioned; and he was filled with admiration and reverence for the good Sisters who showed such beautiful, unselfish charity.

When he told the story of the finding of the sack in the open grave dug up by wild

beasts, the Sisters explained to him that no doubt a caravan of slave dealers had found this child unable to continue the journey with the rest of their captives, and, as the British Government very stringently punished those who killed the natives, they must have been afraid to murder the poor girl outright. So they buried her alive, trusting to the wild beasts to dig up the shallow grave, and devour the living, half-conscious body. This would have been the case but for the timely arrival of the officer.

He finally took his departure, much impressed with all he had seen and heard.

The little girl was bathed, fed, and put to bed, with one of the nuns watching over her. When she revived, nourishment was carefully administered, until she was able to speak. Her dialect, however, was unintelligible to the Sisters. They realized that she must have come from a great distance, and trusted to the natural quickness of some of the natives in grasping the different languages and dialects to interpret her account of herself when she had become better.

In the meantime the preparations for midnight Mass continued. As the hour neared, the child fell into a sound sleep, and the Sister seeing this, left her to go to the little

chapel for Mass. The simple altar was decorated with great care, and the children to be baptized were clothed in white, with white veils on their heads.

Mass had begun. The sound of the little organ and the hymns of the children awoke the stranger. She started up, and clothed in her night-gown made her way to the place whence the sounds came. Trembling, she gazed in wondering awe from behind a pedestal on which was St. Joseph's statue. Her quick eye took in all the beauty: the lighted candles, the green leaves, the flowers, the vested priest, the Sisters, the white-robed children black like herself! It was a vision of heaven to her untaught soul. She fainted away in rapture, and there they found her on the floor, and carried her back to bed.

She soon recovered, and was able to be about. Clothed in the simple garments of the black children she watched and listened, and her worship of the nun who took care of her was most touching. She followed Sister Frances like a dog, scarcely uttering a sound, but her large, expressive eyes told the story of her gratitude.

Ere long the nuns were surprised to hear her utter words and sentences in the dialect they used, and before many weeks she could

make herself understood. She responded to every word that was said. She was a most attractive child. Her features were pleasant, her skin deep olive, her teeth even, and her smile charming. Her hair was rather straight, and her figure now rounding out, was erect and full of grace. Evidently she was of a better class than those around her.

At last she told her story to Sister Frances. She was the daughter of a princess. Her mother and father ruled one of the tribes in the interior, some eight hundred miles away, and they were all happy until a band of wretches attacked their little settlement in search of slaves. The men of the tribe, headed by her father, had gone far off into the bush that day to slay a man-eating lion that had killed several of their number, and on their return they were surprised by the men of the caravan, who fell upon them and slew them before the eyes of their weeping wives and children. Then they selected the finest looking of the women and children, tied them together, and drove them like cattle ahead of the caravan through the wilderness, toward a port where they would be sold into slavery.

The sufferings of these poor creatures were indescribable. Zuliema said that her

mother refused to eat, and tried to bear up stoically. She was of finer physique than some of the others, and held out longer. Corpses of the dead strewed the way as they passed. But there is a limit to all human endurance, and at last the princess' fine frame yielded to the awful privations of the terrible journey. She grew weaker day by day. Her dragging steps retarded the Arabs, who finally determined to kill her. The brutal wretch who claimed her and Zuliema for his share of the slaves, seeing one morning that she was unable to walk another step, took the butt end of his gun, and beat her brains out before the eyes of her shrinking, terrified child. Zuliema gazed like a fascinated bird on the dying face of her mother, and then fastened her bitter look on the murderer as if she would burn him with the intensity of her hate. For a moment the man shrank, but ordering the body of the princess to be thrown to the vultures, he placed the weak, starving child on one of the camels, determined to get rid of her at the first opportunity, as she was too emaciated to sell. They were nearing the British garrisons, so he did not dare kill her. The very next day he tied her naked in a sack, hurriedly dug a two-foot grave, and spread the

earth loosely above it, trusting to the jackals and hyenas to do the rest. The caravan was hardly out of sight when the officer who had come for a day's hunting shot the wild beasts and found the sack.

It was a fortunate rescue for the little princess. The days passed happily. The scene she witnessed that Christmas night, her first glimpse of the convent chapel, remained like a vision of paradise. As the truths of Faith were unfolded to her bright mind she longed for baptism. But the good Sister Frances, knowing how deeply rooted is savagery in the African nature, kept her under instruction and surveillance for a whole year, until the next Christmas came around.

Zuliema was an unusual child. She bore herself proudly, as became a princess. She developed an early maturity, and she commanded the respectful homage of the other children—all unconsciously. Orphan though she was, and hundreds of miles away from her people, she adapted herself to her surroundings, became happy with the good Sisters, and a valuable help in all the works of the mission.

* * * * *

Very early one morning, two days before Christmas, when the Sisters were praying

in the chapel, a great noise and tramping of feet were heard without. Horses were neighing, and men were calling. There were cries of distress mingled with those of command, and loud knocking was heard. It was soon explained. Not far away there had been a skirmish between some robber-Arabs and the British soldiers. Humanity obliged them to bring the wounded to the shelter of the convent, where it was known that the Sisters had medical and surgical skill, and never refused aid to the suffering. Several men were carried in, and were placed on cots in the school house. The Sisters busied themselves with washing the wounds, and binding them up with lint and linen. Although they knew these men were robbers and murderers, they knew also that they were made in the image of Christ, and had a claim on His servants, to whom all races and colors were alike. The English soldiers departed full of admiration for the Sisters. Not one of their number was hurt.

Sister Frances became busy as the daylight advanced, and she called Zuliema, one of her best aids, to bring water, sponges, and linen to dress the wounds of the man who was, apparently, the worst injured of the party.

Zuliema obeyed. But as she gazed on the countenance of the wounded Arab, she gave a fierce, smothered cry like that of a wounded animal. Sister Frances saw with horror that her face became distorted, her eyes flashed fire, her breast heaved. All the savage in Zuliema's nature came back. With a spring she flew at the man, and with both hands clutched his throat in an attempt to strangle him.

The Sister seized her wrists, and tried to quell her passion with a stern look.

Zuliema hesitated.

"He killed my mother!" she cried then. "He beat in her face and head, and laughed at her cries! He kicked her when she died, and kept on kicking her! He threw her body to the big birds with raw necks, and they ate her while she was yet alive! My mother! My poor mother!"

Sister Frances shuddered. She knew it was true. But she held Zuliema's wrists, and said in a voice deep with feeling and power:

"Zuliema is a Christian now. Zuliema wants to be baptized. Christ forgave His enemies on the cross. Zuliema must forgive her enemy."

The savage fire in the girl's blood burned in her cheek, and flashed from her eyes.

"He killed my mother!" she said.

Sister Frances, with strong hands, kept fast hold of her wrists. The wounded man opened his eyes, and the terror in them showed that he recognized her and had heard enough. Sister Frances forced the girl before her until the door was reached, then gently pushed her outside, saying:

"Zuliema will not be baptized this Christmas."

The door closed. The poor girl fled to the chapel, there to ponder over her outburst of revengeful rage, and cry out at last in deep contrition her prayer to Jesus Crucified.

The day passed on. Another of the girls helped Sister Frances with the wounded. The next morning several of them were ready to depart to their people, but the murderer of Zuliema's mother lay suffering. Sister Frances avoided Zuliema, feeling sure that the impulsive girl was fighting her savage nature, and that grace would conquer.

The second day before Christmas Zuliema came, downcast and humble, and threw herself at Sister Frances' feet. Her heart was breaking at the thought of not being bap-

tized. Must she wait another long year? No! She had struggled and struggled to forgive her enemy, and, with God's grace, she had succeeded.

Sister Frances knew what an admission that was. Long experience with the natives had made her know that these savage people *never* forgive. Christianity appeals to them in a thousand ways—they yield to its sweet, persuasive doctrines until the meaning of forgiveness is explained to them, and herein is their stumbling block.

For a savage to forgive his enemies, to cease pursuing them until an eye is taken for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life, is cowardice—contemptible weakness. Sister Frances knew this, and knew that a princess of the savage blood had fought her nature long and valiantly before she could make this avowal.

"My child," she said, "if God has given you the grace to forgive your enemy, and you want to be baptized on Christmas Eve, I will give you entire charge of him. I will see how sincere you are, Zuliema, and if you are faithful to grace, you may win his soul also. Now go and dress his wounds and pray God that you do not fail."

Zuliema shuddered. Then, making the

sign of the cross, she went to the room where her enemy lay. He cried out with terror when he saw her, for he knew that the custom of the people demanded his death. But she came in quietly with her sponges and basin, and when he shrank away she told him not to fear, that she was no longer his enemy. Even then he was not sure; but her deft fingers removed the bandages tenderly, the cooling sponges allayed his fever, and the fresh bandages soothed his aching wounds.

Zuliema did not speak much. Her thoughts worked with God's grace, and each moment a fresh blessing seemed to help her. Over and over again that day she relieved the sufferer. When Christmas Eve came Sister Frances saw that grace had indeed achieved a complete victory, and told her she would be baptized.

Joy filled the girl's heart. The white dress and veil that had been taken away from her were restored, and she was clothed in them, with her companions. The chapel was decked in all the beauty and light that she had seen a year before when it broke on her enraptured vision like a glimpse of paradise.

The midnight Mass was over, and the young catechumens were baptized. Zuliema's

soul became as white as snow, a living temple of grace. When all was over, she went to the side of her enemy, and ministered to him with such a beauty glowing in her eye and on her cheek that he ventured to speak to her, and ask her the reason.

This young apostle told him her joy, explained to him the Faith, and, knowing he was going to die, never ceased her efforts until he, too, asked for baptism, and was made a Christian and heir to God's kingdom.

He died soon after. Zuliema knelt at the bedside of her mother's murderer, praying for him, wiping the death-sweat from his brow, and giving him her own little crucifix to kiss. Such was the miracle grace had wrought.

After the Arab's death, Zuliema resumed her duties and in due time made her first holy Communion. Then the Sisters, knowing the customs of the natives, and that she was of age, spoke to her of marriage. She shook her head:

"My God does not want me to marry," she said.

The Sisters were surprised. It was never heard of that the young girls of their mission refused an eligible husband, and the White Fathers always saw to it that such should be

provided for their young converts. But they said nothing, and Zuliema went about her work unhindered.

Some months afterwards the White Fathers (as the missionaries of the congregation of the Holy Ghost are there called) came that way with their Bishop. The latter was a distinguished man of God, and full of zeal for the African missions. In speaking to the Sisters, he told them he had it in mind for a long time to gather some of the native girls, and found a congregation of black Sisters, who would do immense good work for their people. He had met some incipient vocations, but no one yet who could act as a leader. He needed a foundress whose qualities of mind and heart, and whose bearing would command respect, whose virtues would urge her companions to heroic deeds of love for the benighted Africans.

Sister Frances told the story of Zuliema. Of her heroic struggle with her native prejudices, of her refusal to marry, of her princely blood, and of her unusual virtues. She was brought to his lordship, the Bishop. Instantly he recognized the helper he had sought for—the foundress of his new Order.

To Zuliema it was the crown of her hopes. She knew that the Sisters never had seen

their way to receive any of the native girls into their Order, and she never heard of a society of negro nuns. So she wept for joy at the Bishop's feet, and readily acquiesced in all his plans.

The Bishop organized the Congregation of native nuns, made Zuliema the Mother Superior, and soon she had around her a community of negro novices, full of fervor and zeal. They taught the African children, prepared them for the Sacraments, and in their humble convent gave forth the education and good example they had received from the English Sisters who came from distant Europe.

As far as we know this African princess still lives. And we ask our readers to pray that in the far-off Dark Continent she may continue for years to come to work for God's glory, and the good of her people.

AN IMPORTANT SCIENCE.

FLAMING posters were visible all over the little town. At the corners small boys with bags strung across their shoulders were thrusting big-lettered dodgers into the unwilling hands of the passers-by. Some looked at them curiously and put them in their pockets; some flung them into the gutter after tearing them to shreds.

"Escaped Nun Will Give a Lecture! Horrors of Convents Told!"

Such was the purport of the posters and dodgers that flooded the little borough of McK——— one autumn day in the year 19—.

Many of the townsfolk were disgusted, but many more, through curiosity, went to the lecture and listened to the fraud in woman's clothes, who dared to utter the nameless falsehoods that over and over again have been relegated to the dwelling of the father of lies. In the audience was a curious married woman, who had been persuaded by a friend to hear what the creature would say. It would pass an evening, anyway, as amusements in

the place were rare. She listened, aghast and open-mouthed, to the lecture, and, of course, brought home one of the slanderous pamphlets always on sale at such gatherings.

Next day the so-called "escaped nun" had vanished, but the husband of the woman, hearing his wife speak with horror of the Catholic Church, took the pamphlet and read it as far as his disgust permitted. Flinging it down, he cried out:

"It's all a darned lie—a base lie!"

"How do you know?" demanded his wife.

"Know? I know this. In our mill I have worked for years beside a man, a Catholic Irishman. I know him intimately. He is clean, honest, industrious, upright. I know all his opinions, and I know if he thought the Catholic Church was like this filthy trash he would not stay in it one hour. He hasn't a great amount of education, but he has a lot of keen common sense; he has good ability, and is a sober, pure, religious man. I tell you I have watched him all day long for years, and I know it! If the Roman Catholic Church was what is represented here, he would not hesitate a minute to stand up and denounce it, aye, and leave it instantly. That's what I know," said the excited man.

"Perhaps," argued his wife, "he does not

know all the inside work in his Church. You know the priests are very clever, and it is their business to keep the people in ignorance."

"Well, they would not keep me in ignorance long!" thundered her husband. "I'd get it out of them! And now I think I'll try it. I'll go to that Catholic priest and take him unawares, and if he and the Irishman are right, I'll give in to them. Where does that priest live?"

"Good gracious," said the wife, "you wouldn't speak to a Popish priest?"

"That's just what I'm going to do," said her husband. "I don't believe a word that she-devil said, and no decent people would believe her book. I am going to headquarters to find out a few things for myself. I can soon see where they pull the wool over your eyes."

"Do think about it first. Be careful," said the wife, regretfully, knowing by experience that arguing with her spouse was a fruitless effort. "People will think you are turning Catholic if they see you."

"People be hanged! Let them think what they please. I believe in a square deal and I'll bet on my Irishman every time," he finished, smiling grimly.

So he went that night to the rectory of the Catholic priest. He told the priest the circumstances of the morning, of his argument with his wife, of his disgust with the "escaped nun" pamphlet, and of his friend the Irishman in the mill. On mentioning his name the priest smiled and said: "I know that man."

"His example has taught me more than twenty sermons could have done, sir."

"He is just a consistent Catholic," returned the priest. "But I am glad to see you. I will answer every question, and will put all the information you wish in your hands. There is no inside track in the Catholic Church. Priest and people are bound by the same laws. They are an open book to all, and no effort is made to keep the people in ignorance. Suppose you come to my office? There are two good men there now who visit me regularly in the evening for the purpose of being instructed preparatory to their admission to the Catholic Church."

"But," quickly said the visitor, "you must not misunderstand me—I have not the slightest desire or intention of becoming a Roman Catholic. Nothing would induce me to be one. I am simply a lover of truth, and I want to

know if those things I mentioned are false, and if my friend at the mill is deluded."

"Just as you say," said the priest. "It is not at all necessary for you to come, but I thought you might take a seat and listen to their questions being answered for this evening. Afterwards we could talk it over. You see, I have an appointment with them just at this time."

"That is another side of the matter," said his visitor. "I have no objections to listening to them. Perhaps they have the same questions to ask that I have, and I don't forget that I am asking a favor. I will go with you, sir, for this evening."

The priest led the way to a smaller room, where two men were seated at a little table. The priest gave a kindly nod to them, handed a chair to the visitor, and, going to the table, sat down with the two men. In a short time all three became oblivious of the stranger, who, however, had become extremely interested in the instructions of the priest, and listened to every word. After about an hour the priest arose and dismissed the two men.

"Now, sir," he said pleasantly, "let us have our little talk."

"Not to-night; Father," said the man. "I have heard enough to think about for a while.

I will thank you if you will allow me to come back the evening you appointed for those two men, and if you will also allow me to put some questions and join in their controversy."

"With the greatest pleasure," returned the priest. "I was going to suggest that very thing."

"I wish you would let me buy one of those little pamphlets," he said, pointing to a pile of catechisms on the table near by.

"Please accept one," said the Father. "I would not think of selling you a catechism. This is the first book of information about the Catholic Church—although you say you never intend to be a Catholic."

"You are right," said the visitor. "A Roman Catholic would have no show in my house."

"Well, you are honest and square," said the priest, "and I admire those virtues heartily. But come the next evening without fail, and prime yourself with all the objections and questions you can hold. We'll answer them all. Good-evening."

The priest pleasantly showed the visitor out, and he went away quite satisfied that he was going to be treated squarely, and no effort would be made to "turn" him.

His wife was curious, but she had to be satisfied with his answer that he was going to sift the thing to the bottom, and was going again, as he wasn't through. He dropped the subject, and nothing was said about it. At last his wife forgot it completely. He left the house certain evenings of the week, but always returned in an hour or so. His home life became pleasanter than before.

Where did he go? For three months he went to that rectory. He listened to the priest, he joined in the questions asked by the two men who were always there, he started objections, he pointed out parts of the catechism that he wished explained, and when the priest said to the two men that he thought they were sufficiently instructed in the faith, they answered that they were fully convinced and were ready for the next step.

"Then," said the priest, "I will baptize both of you next Sunday and may God bless you and give you perseverance!"

They rose and said, "Good-night."

But the visitor lingered. When the two men left he said:

"Father, why didn't you ask me what you asked them?"

"You?" said the priest, in assumed surprise. "Why, you told me that you would

never be a Catholic! That was the positive understanding. You came simply out of curiosity to learn the truth—not to join the Church."

"I must join it now," said the man. "I am convinced it is the only true Church."

Needless to say, he was gladly welcomed into the Church, was baptized and received the Sacraments. His changed appearance could not keep the secret long, and when his wife heard he had really become a Catholic her indignation, and even fury knew no bounds. Not content with upbraiding him, she brought the elders of her Church to expose to her poor, benighted husband the awful errors of Romanism and to remove the spell the priest had lain upon him. They came and surrounded his chair when he sat down to rest after his hard day's work in the mill. Kneeling on the floor, they lifted up their hands and voices in most piteous appeals to the Heavenly Father to break the shackles of Popery that bound him and "peel the scales" from his eyes.

Their efforts were entirely unsuccessful. The good man went his way, happy in his new-found faith, and more than ever friendly to the good Irishman at the mill, who had not the least idea that he was in any way the

cause of this remarkable conversion. At home he parried the ridicule, and then the distress of his wife so pleasantly that she stopped allusions to the matter, for she was devotedly attached to him. Watching him closely, however, she saw that his new religion had made him a better man. And as no remarkable excitement occurred in her own place of worship—in fact after a week the "defection" was not even noticed—she began to take courage. She realized that a Roman Catholic, especially when he was one's husband, was just as noble and devoted a man as any one else.

A year passed by. The husband was a fervent convert. All words about religion had ceased between him and his wife. He prayed and he waited, but he said nothing. One Sunday afternoon they passed along the street taking a walk together, and found themselves in the vicinity of the church of his baptism.

"You have never shown me the inside of a Catholic church yet," said the wife. "Are you afraid?"

"Why, my dear," said her husband, in surprise, "it never occurred to me that you would be interested. Will you come now?"

"To be sure," was the answer; "as well now as any time."

They crossed the street and entered the vestibule of the church, where they found the pastor in cassock and biretta walking up and down reading his breviary. He stopped, held out his hand to the lady, and welcomed her cordially. They were evidently well acquainted.

On seeing the amazed look of the man, both laughed. Then the wife said joyously: "Do you think you are going to heaven without me? Don't you think the example of your Catholic life has had some influence?"

Still the man stared without a word.

"Mr. Y———, this is an appointment with your wife," the priest explained. "I have been instructing her for some months, and as she begged me to keep it secret to surprise you, I complied with her wish. She is to be baptized this afternoon and received into the Church. Everything is ready. Let us go in."

The delighted husband was moved to tears. He could only look his happiness; words seemed denied him. Silently he followed. Surely that day there was joy in heaven when husband and wife knelt before the altar—now one in faith and in love and

one in heart. Their children—and the family was large—followed them after some time, and all were baptized Catholics.

Such was the story of this conversion told me by a brother-priest a few months ago. He was the one who instructed and baptized these several converts. And then he said:

"Now, what was the primary cause of all these conversions? Was it some well-written book dealing with Catholic doctrine? No. For the miserable 'escaped nun' pamphlet was the first book that started the inquiry. Was it a powerful sermon—a series of lectures, eloquent and convincing? Was it even the instructions of the priest? No. For something had gone before, silently, powerfully, day by day. What was this influence? It was the good example of that poor Irishman in the mill, in his greasy overalls, with grimy hands and face. Had you asked him to give you a definition of the infallibility of the Pope or the indefectibility of the Church, he might not have given you a classic answer—but he was a past-master in the most important of all sciences—the science of good example."

He is dead now, that honest, pure, sober, clean-speaking, religious man, but his example of what the true faith produces in a

man who has to work hard day by day in the midst of demoralizing influences brought forth the silent admiration of a fellow-worker, led to his conversion, his wife's conversion and the baptism and restoration to the Catholic Church of their six children. How little did that "escaped nun," with her wretched falsehoods, dream that a poor Irishman in the mill would tear down, without a word being uttered by him, not only her shaky fabric of lies, but all the logic of the "elders of the Church," and win to the sweet yoke of Christ eight precious souls, who were by his humble example to taste eternal salvation.

How many there are who could draw souls to the light as he did! How many could exert silently yet surely the tremendous influence of good example!

THE CHAPLAIN'S STORY.

VISITING the chaplain of a famous hospital—he had been stationed there many years—the conversation turned on God's great and wonderful mercy to wandering souls in their extremity.

"Let me tell you, Father Alexander," he began, very earnestly, "of an extraordinary case that came under my own observation; it will prove how true are your words—that God's love surpasses all understanding, and it may encourage any doubting soul you meet always to trust in Him.

"We had an ambulance call about ten o'clock one night from the railroad company, saying that a man had been knocked down and injured by a train. Instantly the ambulance dashed off to the scene, and in less than half an hour it returned. The surgeons and nurses were ready and went out to meet it. When the door was opened a man stepped out of the ambulance and, although he looked pale and dazed, he walked into the corridor!

"'Where is the patient?' asked the surgeon.

"'Here I am!' said the man, looking at him.

"'But I thought it was a railroad accident,' said the surgeon.

"The resident doctor, who accompanied the ambulance, said:

"'This is the man who was knocked down by the train. He must be examined.'

"At the prospect of 'something doing' the doctors busied themselves and led the way to the operating room, the patient walking with them.

"Little was said, but when they entered the white-lined room, with its white tables, white belongings, dazzling with electrics, the patient said:

"'What are you going to do to me?'

"'We are going to examine you carefully to see where you are hurt; have you any pain?'

"'I cannot say; I feel dazed. But first I want to see a Catholic priest. Is there one around?' he said to the Sister in charge of his case.

"'There is one in the house,' said the Sister stepping forward.

"'Could I see him?'

"'Of course you can.'

"'I wish you would give us a chance to find out what is wrong with you,' said the surgeon, 'we will help you on the table.'

"'You won't cut, or probe, or do anything till the Sister comes back, will you?'

"'No, if you say so,' said the surgeon. 'Perhaps there is not much wrong. Come, now!'

"'Yes, there is,' said the patient. 'I'll let you look, but I must see the priest before you do anything.'

"He walked to the table, while the Sister left the room to search for me. It was between eleven o'clock and midnight, but of course I arose and went at once. When we arrived at the operating room, the surgeon said:

"'Father, we have examined this man from head to foot and there is not a scratch on him, not a bone displaced. He is still calling for you, so we will wait until morning for a more thorough examination. Sister will give him a room where he can be comfortable, and I hope he will have a good night's rest.' And the surgeons, laying aside their instruments, left the room.

"'Father, thank God you have come! I need you very much. Thank you, Sister.' I

made a motion to the Sister and she left to give directions about the patient's room.

"I was a long time with the man! How my heart went up in thanksgiving to God for him! I heard his confession, which he made with most edifying sentiments and then I sent for the Sister. When she came I said to her:

" 'Sister, I am going to give this man the Last Sacraments; will you get the things ready?'

"She looked her amazement, but she only said:

" 'His room is ready, Father; don't you think he had better come to it? It is not far.'

" 'Yes,' said the patient. 'I would rather do so.' He seemed to stagger, and she called an orderly.

" 'Father,' said the Sister to me, 'do you think his case is so serious?'

" 'Something impels me to give him the Last Sacraments,' said I, 'it may be a special grace; God's goodness is past all comprehension.'

"She said no more and while the orderly was assisting him to bed we went to the chapel, whence I brought the Blessed Sacrament, while she carried the lighted candle through the long corridors to the room of this

unusual patient. He was anointed and received Holy Viaticum with extraordinary fervor, and when I gave him the last blessing he crossed himself and folded his hands reverently. When all was over, and I had prepared to leave for the night, he turned to me and said:

"'Oh, Father, how can I ever thank God for this night! I think I can sleep now;' and I saw a tear steal down his cheek.

"We bade him good-night or rather good-morning, for it was long past two o'clock; and then left him. At seven o'clock the nurse met me and said the surgeon sent this word:

"'We are going to that accident case in an hour; give him a light breakfast if he wants anything, and tell him we will make a more thorough examination when we get there.'"

"I went with her to the patient's room. He was lying in a stupor, and entirely unconscious; the orderly said he had never spoken or moved since he bade us good-night. On examination it was found that his brain had been injured by the fall and, in the opinion of the specialist who was summoned, he would never regain consciousness.

"*And he never did!*

"For nine days he lay there without one glimmer of reason. Various remedies were

proposed—some were tried, but without the least effect. On the ninth day he died!

"God's tender mercy again! God's great and boundless love! And then I recalled the night he walked into the operating room and insisted on seeing the priest. If he had not done so then, his last chance would have vanished.

* * * * *

"Some days afterward, a lawyer and a priest came to the hospital and asked for a certain patient. We had never heard the name, but, on being shown the photograph of the one for whom they were searching, I recognized the man who had died unconscious after making his peace with God. He had given an assumed name which his relatives had never heard. He was of a fine family, but had lived a rather wild life for some years. The lawyer was his brother, the priest his uncle. When I told them of the grace he received before his death, and of his fervent reception of the Last Sacraments, they joined with me in thanking God."

THE STRENGTH OF THE WEAK.

IS THERE a truism more true than the fact that we get weary of well-doing as of everything else? As life goes on we discover its inexorable weariness, and unless the Master sustain us we fall by the wayside! Even in our missionary life we know it is His sustaining Hand that gives success to the efforts we make, and often He confounds us by making use of the weakest means to humble our self-sufficiency.

So said an experienced and devoted missionary to me one day—a man as learned as he was holy. His words impressed me deeply. He went on further:

"I remember preaching a mission one autumn in a small town. I had one assistant—a delicate, sickly man (since dead), who by right should have been retired. But his burning zeal refused to believe he could work no longer, and as I was robust and strong I was willing to bear the brunt, and relieve him of all the hardships. In my conceit I supposed mine would be the greater fruit!

"One morning my assistant looked more

ill than usual. He was ghastly pale, with two hectic spots on his cheekbones, and seemed scarcely able, after Mass, to drag himself from the sacristy to swallow a cup of coffee. He went to his room to lie down at once, for he was to give the eight o'clock instruction. I asked him if he felt able for it. He replied: 'Oh, yes; I have often felt worse.'

"At the proper time he crawled downstairs, and appeared on the platform erected in the church.

"He gave a solid, practical sermon, but it was evident that he was making a great effort. I saw him wipe his brow several times with his handkerchief, an unfailing sign of his physical weakness. He was obliged also to shorten the time allotted to the eight o'clock instruction, and no sooner was it over than he hurried to his room again. He met me on the way, and said in a grieving voice:

" 'Oh, Father, what a useless "assistant" I am! Here I was obliged to cut short the shortest of the sermons. I felt so weak and dizzy; once I had to stop long enough to beg God secretly to help me through. What a pitiful excuse of a helper I am!'

"The poor man shook his head despairingly.

" 'Don't be distressed, Father,' I said,

thinking of my own robust health, with a secret pleasure that I could talk for two hours without fatigue. 'The Lord accepts the good will every time. Go and rest a while. Confessions won't begin till ten o'clock.' He left me with a sigh. He had done his best, and it amounted, so he thought, to nothing but failure. But God chooses the weak to confound the strong, as I soon found out.

"That afternoon a gentleman called and asked to see the missionary who had given the eight o'clock instruction that day. My assistant, when he heard it, said there must be a mistake; the instruction was too short and unimpressive to bring any one to the rectory. However, he went down to the reception room. As soon as he entered the gentleman arose and greeted him. He was an educated man of fine presence.

" 'Father,' he said, 'I am so glad you have come down. You attracted me every time you spoke, and this morning was the climax. I am a great sinner. I have not been to my duty for thirty-five years. I have never had peace of soul, but when my conscience goaded me unbearably, I went from one church to another wherever a mission was held in hopes that my heart would be touched by some sermon. Never in all these years have I met

the man God intended to convert me until I heard you; and this morning when I listened to your inspiring words—when I saw you, pale and weak, uttering those fiery denunciations of the procrastinating sinner, your whole heart in your words, I felt I must speak to you, and ask you to hear my confession!'

"Thus he spoke to my sickly assistant—the man whose voice scarcely carried half down the church. More, this was the one man in the congregation whom the pastor had specially mentioned he hoped would profit by the mission. God had given this man's soul to my broken down assistant!

"Need I say he went to confession, and received Holy Communion with wonderful fervor? He attended every sermon during the mission, and the edification he gave to the people of the parish was stimulating. He visited my assistant every day, and never seemed to tire of his advice or his presence.

"I need not say that the consolation he gave him, and the lesson then given me, were both marked down in the record of that mission. No doubt, to many who read this, the fulness of God's promise will rise to strengthen the weak and to make the strong realize that no matter what may be the labor, God *alone* giveth the increase."

TWO SINNERS.

CLANG! clang! clang! The hospital ambulance, with its galloping horses, dashed through the streets on a hurry call. Everywhere the right of way was given them, for the throngs in the street knew that life or death hung on the swift and unobstructed path of those rushing horses. I stood at the hospital window to wait their return, for I had heard the call, and knew I would be needed.

"What is it?" I asked the office employee.

"Two men with crushed skulls, Father—a fall of slate where they were working. They may not be alive when the ambulance reaches them!"

"Poor fellows," I murmured. My thought was: what about their desolate homes, their wives and children—and most of all their immortal souls!

I could not leave the spot, but paced up and down the corridor. Very soon the ambulance dashed into the courtyard; the doctors and orderlies ran out. Tenderly the

two helpless men on their stretchers were lifted to the elevator, and in a few minutes they were on their beds surrounded by the doctors.

I was close by. The senior surgeon paused, after a swift, searching examination, and looked at me.

"Skulls fractured, Father, in both cases. Little hope!"

Quickly the necessary sterilizing and bandaging of the wounds were completed, stimulants given and nurses installed.

I stood there, waiting for a conscious moment. There was not a sound from the patients but stertorous breathing; both were oblivious of suffering for the time being. They were young men—scarcely more than twenty-eight. They had been working side by side in the trench, when the earth loosened, and with a crash they were crushed down, and slate and shale heaped on them, burying them in a living grave. As quickly as possible their companions dug them out. They were brought unconscious to the hospital. No one knew their religion.

Suddenly one stirred, and his tongue was loosed. Oaths and curses fell from his lips! I bent over him, took his hand, tried to talk to him, but all I said was unavailing to stop

the flow of blasphemy. He was half conscious, crazed by suffering. As his voice grew louder, his fellow sufferer opened his eyes. He heard and knew what his comrade was saying.

"Stop, Jim!" he muttered feebly. "Say 'Lord, have mercy on me!' "

"My son," I asked, "are you a Catholic?"

"Yes, Father," he said feebly.

"I am a priest. Won't you make your confession? You are dangerously hurt."

"How long will I live, Father?" said he.

"Not long, my son. We must lose no time. When you make your peace with God, you will feel easier. God is good."

I was interrupted by a terrible oath from the other bed. It startled me, and made my blood run cold to hear such words from a dying man.

"Poor Jim," said my penitent. "Father, he doesn't know swearing is a sin. He has no religion, but he is such a tender-hearted fellow. He tried to save me"—he gasped out the words.

"But your confession, my son?" I said, fearing his strength would go. I nodded to the nurses—they left. At once he tried to bless himself, and without much assistance made his confession, which was punctured by

the curses of his half-conscious comrade. At every curse my poor penitent said, "Lord, have mercy on him," and resumed his confession. I was touched and astonished at his truly Catholic spirit, his piety and charity. But it made me shiver each time to hear the oaths that came out distinctly but unmistakably from the dying lips of that other stricken man, so soon to appear before God.

I gave my poor penitent absolution, and anointed him. His sufferings became excruciating. I recalled the nurses, and the surgeons who came in gave me a look which told me the end was not far off. The young fellow fixed his glazing eyes on me. I tried to whisper words of hope and contrition and began the prayers of the Church for the dying.

Still at intervals came the awful muttering and cursing from the next bed. At last there was a fearfully distinct curse and my poor penitent, with a strong effort, said quite distinctly: "Have mercy on poor Jim." I stopped and whispered, "Pray for him when you see God, my son!" He looked at me—I saw he understood.

It was an incredibly touching scene—a dying man praying for another dying man!—

one penitent, one obdurate, like the malefactors on Calvary!

I began the solemn prayers of the Church: "Depart, oh Christian soul, in the name of God the Father." There was silence in the room now, broken only by the death rattle. The breathing came faster. The sweat stood on his forehead. I raised my hand for the last absolution, and as I said the final words the poor crushed creature gave forth his soul to his Maker. The attendants waited a few minutes—then drew the sheet over the white face.

I turned to the other bed. An aged man stood beside it.

"Are you a relative?" I said.

"I am his father," was the reply.

"What religion does your son profess?" I asked.

"He hasn't any, that I know; we are Methodists."

"Is your son baptized?" I said.

"We don't baptize. I don't think he cares enough for any Church to join it."

Just then the injured man started up in his bed and tried to speak. I saw from his eyes he was conscious.

"I want *his* Church," he cried, "*his* Church

is the only one. Don't you see him there? That's what he is saying!"

A feeling of awe crept over me, over the father and the nurses as they looked in the direction he indicated. I felt that God was working a miracle of grace before us. Had that poor man whose eyes were just closed to this world, besought God for his comrade —for "poor Jim"? It seemed like it.

"My son," I said, taking his hand, "don't you want to meet your comrade in heaven? Don't you want to go there? If you do you must be baptized and believe in the Holy Catholic Church—the only true Church."

"I do!" said the poor fellow, his eyes still fixed on a spot at the foot of his bed.

"Do you want to be baptized and become a Catholic Christian?" I said, marveling at the evident supernatural interference—almost visible to our senses.

"I want to be baptized," he said firmly and distinctly.

"You are sorry for all the wrong you have ever done, and especially for the curses and oaths you have ever uttered?"

"I am! I am!" he cried, and sank back with tears rolling down his cheeks. The surgeon laid his finger on his wrist.

"Do you wish to be baptized?"

"Yes, oh yes," he murmured, his voice growing weak.

I put on my stole, seized a glass of water and placing a folded towel on his pillow, I avoided the bandages and baptized him.

Oh, the marvel of the Sacraments! His expression changed, his convulsed face became tranquil; his heavy breathing became quieter. His eyes opened, and I almost fancied that a slight smile was in their depths as he fixed them on the foot of his bed. I am as sure as I live that the comrade who had just passed into eternity obtained this poor man's conversion—had besought God's grace for him and was waiting to bring him as a trophy to the feet of the divine Saviour!

I looked at the man. The lips were growing white—I knew that he was dying. I began the "Our Father," and his lips tried to frame the words; I began the act of contrition, and his agony grew visibly, but the words of prayer came in snatches from his lips. I said the "Credo." He tried to follow me. He was still conscious; I raised my hand, I gave him the last absolution, and, quickly, like the last spurt of a dying candle, the spark of life went out.

He had died a baptized Catholic—that man who had been brought to the hospital cursing

and swearing most terrible oaths an hour before! All was over. Both of those souls were in Eternity! The one (no doubt of it) had pleaded with God for the other, and his prayer was granted.

We left the room in silence, but all felt that the supernatural had been there before our eyes. Christ the Redeemer who died between two sinners on Calvary, and who would have willingly saved both, had not permitted here that one of His erring but ignorant sons should be a castaway, because the voice of pleading arose in his behalf. He was saved. Both were that day within the threshold of paradise!

FRUITION.

IT WAS summer in the foot-hills of the Adirondacks. Visitors were coming and going. Among them were a charming old lady and her two lovely daughters. This amiable and sweet old person was of unusual piety and goodness. She loved God and her neighbor—was a devout reader of the Bible, and was devoured with zeal for the salvation of those wandering souls that were not members, like herself, of the "enlightened" Protestant Church.

More than anything else, she was full of pity for poor "Papists," those precious souls whose misguided pastors led them through devious ways to perdition. In her sincere zeal she pondered over their misfortune, and almost felt herself to be a prophetess sent by God to warn them of their danger.

The more she dreamed, the more anxious she became for an opportunity. She was oblivious of the beauty of the grand old mountains, the royal woods, the crisp piney

odors of the hills, and the delights of their wooded pathways. Her only thought was Religion!—how could she place some soul on the right path to heaven?

Her opportunity came! The Catholic pastor of the vicinity had a mixed congregation of French-Canadians, to which race he himself belonged and although his church was fifteen miles away from the town where our venerable lady stayed, she determined to pay him a visit and state her "mission"! He received her cordially, and from commonplace topics they drifted to religion.

"Do you know," said the lady, with all courtesy and gentleness, "I have been thinking much of you, since I saw you in your church? Forgive me if I say that I grieve that one so intelligent should be led away, with all his people, from the purity of the Gospel (as we read it in the Bible), to the errors of Rome!"

"And are you so sure of that, madame?" said the priest.

"Indeed, I am, or I would not dare to introduce the subject! Feeling myself so entirely right, I do not think it presumptuous in me to acknowledge this strong, unquenchable desire to see you right, too. I feel it is an inspiration—a light, even a MISSION

from the Holy Ghost, to guide you to the Lord Jesus."

The priest respected her evident sincerity. He knew it would be useless to begin a controversy so he said, mirthfully:

"My dear madame, I believe you to be entirely sincere in your desire to convert me. If you can convince me that I am wrong, I am most willing to listen. But on one condition."

"Name it, my dear sir!" said the delighted lady.

"Have you ever heard of a prayer called the 'Hail Mary'?"

The lady reflected.

"Yes," she said. "I had a little maid in my family, a French-Canadian orphan, who was a pious Roman Catholic. When I asked her if she prayed, she told me she said the 'Our Father' and the 'Hail Mary.' I never interfered with her. I consider that all prayers have some good in them!"

"So they have," said the priest. "And now, since you have heard of the 'Hail Mary' I promise that I will listen to your 'mission,' if *you promise me* that you will say or read that little prayer every day till we meet again. Will you promise?"

The old lady was so eager to convert the

affable pastor that she gave her word: She actually gave her word to say the "Hail Mary" every day!

And then she poured out her mission with all the fire of a prophetess. The substance of her speech was that he was in darkness. He must come forth from that darkness by studying the Bible and preaching it alone; then he and his people would see the light, and leave the shadow of death for life everlasting.

The priest listened attentively, never interrupting, and courteously promised he would certainly think of what she had said, and would pray for the light of the Holy Spirit in all his undertakings.

"And now," said he, "I have redeemed my promise. I have listened to you. It remains for you to fulfil yours. You will daily say that prayer, the "Hail Mary'?"

"I certainly will," said the poor old lady, delighted that the priest seemed so favorably impressed. "I hope to call soon again!"

The priest politely showed her to the door, and as she passed out of sight, he said smilingly to himself:

"The good God will pity your sincere, well-meaning efforts, my dear lady, and you will be saved anyway, because you are working according to your lights. That 'Hail

Mary' is going to take root somewhere, and bear its fruits to the Church!"

He was right. The dear old lady never called again. She passed away to the presence of God, still dreaming of the Holy Spirit's message. She was in good faith, and so she was judged by a merciful God. But she never forgot her promise to say the "Hail Mary" every day.

And now behold the fruits. After her death, strange to say, an unconquerable yearning seized her eldest daughter to know something of the Catholic Church. She found the opportunity to inquire and her inquiries led her to be instructed and to be baptized. She is now a fervent convert. Her younger sister is inclining the same way, and there is little doubt that she, too, will follow in her footsteps. Ere long the heartfelt wish of her departed mother will be fulfilled—although in a manner far different to that which she anticipated. Out of the darkness she will come to the true path, that ever leads to light.

THE ORGANIST.

SEATED in the garden of a seminary for theological students in a far away city, one evening, the conversation turned on the value of kindness. I was speaking of the human heart and its unfailing susceptibility to gentle deeds, also that kindness brings its own reward. My listeners—a fine group of young men, all ecclesiastical students—were drinking in, with eager pleasure, the fruits of my missionary career. A few random words of acquiescence, a few light comments on personal incidents occurred—and then there was a lull. I looked around. The beauty of the evening was entrancing. The summer was waning, and the full foliage of the trees everywhere shaded the quiet seminary grounds. It was after supper and we were gathered in a pleasant spot where flowers grew and a fountain trickled from a high spray into one basin after another in musical drops. Some birds were twittering good night. A faint star appeared in the blush of the sunset and in the distance we heard the

deep notes of the organ. The other students were practicing in the choir of the church.

The distant music of the organ brought to mind a reminiscence of the long ago—of my own seminary life—and I told the students so.

"What was it, Father?"

"Do tell us!" they cried with one voice.

I looked at the earnest, manly faces beaming above the Roman collars—and felt they would profit by it.

"The organ makes me think of it—and it is all about a little act of kindness," I began. "Many years ago our class—twelve of us—were ordained deacons. We had looked forward to this step in our priestly career with intense joy. It was the emphasis of our severance with the world, an entrance into the privileges of the sanctuary. We all had strong vocations, and our priestly professors had spared nothing to foster them. So when we were deacons we reverently rejoiced in our privileges, among them that of our proximity to the Blessed Sacrament. We could open the Tabernacle of the Holy of holies; we could expose our blessed Saviour in the ostensorium for Benediction, and again restore Him to the tabernacle when Benediction was over. We each took our turn at this

privilege. Need I say that our strong faith was made stronger and our love for the Eucharistic God increased by the closeness of our contact with Him?

"A whole year passed by. No one noticed that one of our number had never knelt with the priest for Benediction. He was our organist. A pale, delicate fellow with a heart of fire; mortified, holy, exact, saintly. He was too good to ask any one to give him a turn, and so he played the organ each Benediction and sang the chants of the Church, while, naturally, he yearned to kneel at the foot of the altar and exercise the privilege of his ordination. One day it struck a companion of mine that Mr. Z—— had never been in the sanctuary.

"He said to me:

" 'Look here! have you noticed that Mr. Z—— never gets a chance to serve as deacon for Benediction? It is nearly a year since we were ordained, and we've all had two or three turns, while he has not had one. It is my turn this evening. I'm not much of a player, but I think I can get through the music if I practice a bit beforehand. I'll go this minute and make the offer.'

" 'Go ahead, Mr. Brady!' I said. 'I wish I had thought of it.'

"The kind-hearted fellow went to Mr. Z—— and asked him if he would like to serve in his turn at Benediction.

" 'God bless you, Mr. Brady,' said Mr. Z——. 'But who will play the organ?'

" 'I'll try,' said his fellow-student with a manly blush. 'I'm out of practice, but just have the plain chant and I guess I'll get through. You have never yet served at Benediction, Mr. Z——. And I know you want to.'

" 'Want to?' burst out Mr. Z——. 'Of course I want to! I have just longed—just longed, I tell you, to be so close to the Sacred Heart. I have sighed with "wanting" when I saw you fellows, one by one, open that sacred door, and place the Divine Saviour in the monstrance and kneel so close to adore Him! Want to? Why, Mr. Brady, you have done me such a kindness that I will never forget it!'

" 'Why in the world didn't you ask some of us to change?' Mr. Brady blurted out, feeling a twinge of remorse all through his being for the thoughtlessness of the class that had thus starved the devotion of this beautiful soul.

" 'Oh, I couldn't ask for such a favor,' he replied in a low voice. 'Every one values it

as much as I do. I would not be so presumptuous as to ask.'

"Mr. Brady looked at him. Never had he seemed so frail, so white, so spiritual. His great dark eyes were the only vivid features in his face—and he was awed, he knew not why, in his presence.

"Mr. Brady played for Benediction that night and Mr. Z—— served as deacon. We students, who had heard the story, watched him. His face glowed like an angel's as he opened the tabernacle door and placed the Blessed Sacrament in the ostensorium. Such reverence, such absorbed devotion, we seldom witnessed. With the stole about his shoulder, over his white surplice, he might have been taken for a St. Stephen or a St. Lawrence. At the foot of the altar with clasped hands, he knelt, and his eyes never left the Sacred Host. It seemed as if his hands were reluctant to place the monstrance in the veiled hands of the priest at the Benediction. When it was over, and he restored the Host to the tabernacle, the same light was on his countenance. We remarked afterwards that he looked as if his heart's desire was satisfied.

"This was Sunday. I lost sight of the circumstance until I met Mr. Brady on Wed-

nesday evening. His face was serious and his voice trembled.

"'Did you hear about Mr. Z——?' he said.

"'No!' I exclaimed, 'what about him?'

"'Seriously ill! He went to the hospital this afternoon.'

"'You don't say! I never noticed his absence.'

"'Oh! he is one of those quiet fellows that slip out of sight,' said Mr. Brady with a sigh. 'He never tells anything.'

"At once we both recalled the scene at Benediction only three days before.

"'I'm mighty glad I gave him my turn,' said Mr. Brady as he walked away.

"Mr. Z—— died on Saturday like the saint that he was, strengthened by the Sacraments. There was dismay in the seminary. Before he died he asked for Mr. Brady, and when the big-hearted fellow stood over him, tears running down his cheeks, Mr. Z—— said to him in a low tone:

"'I expected this breakdown, Brady. It is just as well, for I am neither strong enough nor worthy enough to make a good priest. But I will never, never forget that if it had not been for you, these poor hands of mine would never have had the blessed privilege

of holding the sacred body of my Lord. Pray for me, old friend.'

"In an hour he was dead. Mr. Brady couldn't stand it. It was a grievous affliction. When all was over he came to my room, laid his head down on the table and sobbed out:

" 'Thank God I was once kind to a saint!'

"In June the eleven of us deacons were ordained priests. Not one among us but felt that Mr. Z—— was hovering over us—perhaps extending hands of blessing that were not anointed with the chrism of priesthood, but consecrated by the touch of that one contact with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament the Sunday he served at Benediction."

* * * * *

Deep silence had fallen on the students. Twilight had crept on and the moon was up. Its white light chastened and spiritualized their features. I saw that the good seed had gone down deep into their hearts.

Just then the bell rang. We arose and went toward the chapel. No one had spoken. There was no need for words.

THE LIGHT OF HIS EYES.

"HOW marvelous are the ways in which God brings the forces of His power and tenderness to bear on human souls!"

Thus said a good Jesuit to me not long ago.

"Let me tell you a little incident," he continued. "It happened a few years since and was told me by one of the participants.

"It was in the days now past when we used bicycles. One of our younger men, by no means an expert, was cautiously wobbling his wheel along directly behind an elderly man who was about as poor a rider as himself. Suddenly the elder man's wheel dashed against a cart at a crossing. The wheel overturned and was smashed, while the prostrate man received in his face the full force of a broken spoke, gouging out an eye, which lay on his cheek, a bloody and hideous spectacle. Immediately, before the crowd gathered, the priest sprang from his wheel, and ran to assist the prostrate man. He found that the poor man was more stunned than hurt except for his face, and his eye, which was a

terrible sight. Having brushed off the dust and mud, he took a clean handkerchief from his pocket, and giving it to the first small boy at hand—and they were at hand in a trice—told him to wet it at the nearest hydrant. The boy wasn't ten seconds gone, and came back with the dripping handkerchief. The priest carefully wiped the blood from the eyeball and, raising the eyelid, forced back the ball into its socket. He then tied the wet handkerchief over the eye, and around the head. The man was much shaken, and the priest advised him to go to the nearest doctor. On finding that the injured man could walk, he started him on his way, and mounted the wheel to continue his own journey.

"As he went along, the thought occurred to him that mayhap he had been too hasty. What did he know of surgery, or the replacing of an eyeball? Suppose blood poisoning should set in on account of his unskillful act! Suppose the man should die! He blamed himself for not taking his wheel and hunting up a surgeon. But, he then reflected, he did the best he knew how—and his motive was pure charity. He had never seen the man before, so he left him to God and went about his daily work.

"Next day he read a greatly exaggerated

account of the accident. He was lauded as a hero, and the gentleman in question was described as one of the well-known, highly respected citizens of the town. The latter was reported to be completely out of danger, and his eye saved. Not anxious for notoriety, the Father took good care to keep the matter as quiet as possible. He remembered, however, that the man to whom the accident had happened was a noted bigot, a Puritan of the bluest type.

"A prayer rose to his lips, however, that the Lord would have pity on that poor man's soul.

"Time passed, a year at least, and the accident was forgotten, when one day the priest in question was called to the parlor of the rectory. An elderly, dignified gentleman who wore glasses, arose to greet him. Taking a folded white handkerchief from his breast pocket, he displayed a name in the corner of it.

"'Is that your name, Father?' said the visitor.

"The priest looked at the handkerchief in astonishment. It was his name without doubt.

"'Yes, sir,' was the reply, 'but how did you come into possession of my handkerchief?'

"'Do you remember a bicycle accident about a year ago in which you figured, together with a smashed-up party and his bicycle? You put a man's eye back into its socket as deftly as if you had studied surgery all your life!'

"'Why,' laughed the priest, 'now that you mention it, I remember it. Are you the sufferer?'

"'I was the sufferer,' said the man, 'and were it not for you I would be blind to-day. You did the job so quickly and so well that there are left behind no ill effects worth mentioning. When I showed my eye to a specialist he was amazed at the completeness of the job, and when I told him I lost track of you, he said I owed you my sight, and perhaps my life.

"'But I had the handkerchief you tied around my head, and your name was there in full. I wasn't long in finding you out, and I found your house pretty soon, too. I have been visiting your church, attracted by my desire to see you, and have been listening to your sermons, and to those of the other Fathers here.

"'My mind was enlightened, my heart touched. I went to one of the priests, and having been instructed, I have lately been

received into the Church. I repressed my desire to talk to you, wishing to wait until I could tell you that you had given sight, not only to my eyes, but to my soul. I am a Catholic now, and to you I owe the light of my eyes, and the light of faith. Moreover, my family—wife and children—are all under instruction, and will follow me into the Church. Your act of charity, and this white handkerchief which revealed your identity, were the means God gave me to see the light. I have come this morning to tell you the whole beautiful story, and to thank you.'

"Need it be said that the priest blessed God, who had made him an instrument in so remarkable a conversion? How little we know of the influence we exercise by our simplest words and works of charity upon those we meet!"

THE TENDER PHYSICIAN

INTO THE KINGDOM.

THE other evening, a priest of my acquaintance called for a social visit, and as he was obliged to leave early, I took my hat and went a short distance with him. The night was fine, and the moonlight beautiful.

Our conversation turned on the conversion of the famous theatrical manager, Henry E. Abbey, who was attracted to the Church first by noticing the clear, business-like methods of her beliefs, especially by the system and order evidenced in her mission-work: "No faltering, no doubting; she speaks with authority, and no unbiased mind can fail to be convinced of her truth!"

"Speaking of the stage," said my companion, "let me tell you a a story of another member of the stage fraternity, who was convinced of the truths of religion by watching the results of believing them in others."

"By all means," I replied. "Go ahead."

"Well, it came about this way. One of our Fathers gave a mission in a certain city about five years ago. As he is one of the ablest and

most powerful preachers we have, the church was crowded every night. The end of the mission came. The final sermon was on the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary and the all-powerful efficacy of the Mass. It was a masterpiece, and the people, deeply impressed with the magnificent explanation and appeal to their souls, filed slowly out of the church, while the priest remained a few moments in the sacristy.

"As he stood there, a young lady of great beauty and distinguished appearance presented herself at the door.

"She advanced at once to the missionary, and said: 'Father, I would like you to say a Mass for me, but,' she added doubtfully, 'I am not a Catholic, and I am an actress; will that make any difference?'

" 'Certainly not, my child,' said the priest, moving toward a chair, 'of course I will say a Mass for you.'

"He turned, but the lady had gone—with a scarcely audible, 'Oh, thank you!'

"True to his promise, the priest said the Mass for the mysterious lady, thought of the matter a good deal, and then, because other important things claimed his attention, forgot all about it.

"Four years passed. The good Father

had given many missions and travelled many hundreds of miles. At a long distance from the city where he had met this lady, he arrived late one evening at another city where he was to give a Retreat. With the usual crowd he passed out of the railroad station, and made his way to the church where he was due that night. He was a complete stranger in the city. He delivered his opening sermon, and then retired.

"The next morning after his Mass at 7:30, the porter informed him that a lady was waiting in the parlor, most anxious to see him.

" 'It must be a mistake,' he said, 'I have no acquaintances here.'

"But being assured that there was no mistake, he hurried to the parlor, for he had no time to lose. The moment he opened the door he recognized the lady whom he had met four years before in the city of X———, hundreds of miles away, and who had asked him to say a Mass for her. He was amazed, remembering that she was an actress, and a non-Catholic.

" 'I ask your pardon, Father, for troubling you so very early,' she said. 'I saw you and recognized you in the train last evening, and heard that you came here to this church.

Fearing I would miss you, I made an early start. Can you spare me a few moments, Father? I have something to tell you that I can tell no one else.'

"'For anything connected with his priestly duty, a priest simply *has* to have time,' said the Father, motioning her to a chair while he seated himself.

"'Thank you, Father,' said the lady. 'I have been an actress for a number of years, and have had splendid success. I was a member of the opera in the city where you preached that mission four years ago, and I am the star of the principal theater in this city. I need not tell you my name, or that no one knows or believes that I would ever come to see a priest. I have everything a human heart can long for; youth, wealth, praise, love. Yet I am not happy. I have felt a longing for something, I know not what, for a long time past. I have no religion, and have been looking among my companions of the stage, curious to learn their inward thoughts. They live as I do, enjoying travel, change, excitement, and the too-free-and-easy life of the stage fraternity. But in all these past years I have found but one who told me she was happy.

"'This is a young girl beginning her

career at the foot of the ladder, so to speak. One day I talked to her quite a while, and I asked her if she really had a happy heart. Her smile was so sincere that I could not doubt her words. I have watched her, pried into her conduct day and night, and soon learned that she lived a retired life compared with ours. She did not attend our frequent, and sometimes unseemly and wild orgies after a season of success, although she was a lovely, kind-hearted, beautiful girl. I also found out that although she had many male admirers, she kept them at a distance. Then little by little I became aware that her life was one of absolute purity in word and deed, and that I could bear no comparison with her. I learned that she was religious, and I determined to find out what was the religion that kept her like a lily in the midst of dissipation. When I next saw her, after many hours of thought about it, I said to her:

"'"You are very correct and reserved. Is it because of your religion? What is it?"

"'"I am a Catholic, madame," was her reply. '"I attend to the duties of my church, and that is my salvation and my happiness.'"

"'I thought over her answer, and deter-

mined I would find out something about the Catholic religion. Your mission was going on at the time, and I knew the Catholic church, so I slipped away one night from my noisy friends and went right over to where you were preaching. Unfortunately it was the conclusion of the mission, so I had no chance to profit by it. But I listened breathlessly to all you said about the great Sacrifice of the Altar, and the thought entered my mind that perhaps you could say a Mass for me—the great effects of which you so masterfully explained, and so warmly commended to the Catholic people. Frightened at my boldness, I went to the sacristy where I was directed to find you, and asked you to say the Mass. Do you remember?'

"I had listened without a word to this outpouring from a soul whose sincerity I felt, and who was drawn to God by the magnetism of His divine Heart. I looked at the speaker. She was a noble looking woman, still young and attractive, and of those easy, distinguished manners that are given to all whose stage career is successful.

"'Do I remember, my child?' I said heartily. "I remember distinctly. I said the Mass for you next day. For a long time I remembered you, and then—'

"'And then,' she interrupted, 'you naturally forgot. That is not all. The good God did not forget. Not a day has passed in all these years that something did not impel me to pray in my own way that I might see you again. My prayer has been heard. Here I am. I ask you to give me instruction, and receive me into that Church which is so Godlike in its pure and holy doctrines.'

"My heart overflowed with joy. At once I began to instruct and prepare this chosen soul for reception into the Catholic Church. Although she had never received religious instruction, the task was not hard. Her native intelligence, her quick apprehension, and above all her intense desire, made the work easy. Before I left the place I had the happiness of baptizing her, of giving her the Sacraments, and of placing her on the road to a holy Catholic life. She continued in her profession, and is very successful in it. But with success generally comes a sacrifice; and God required it, not from her, apparently, but from another.

"A year later I was in another city, giving a mission in a certain parish. The pastor, during conversation, spoke of his visits to a hospital nearby, and of a young woman

who had been crippled by an unfortunate fall.

" 'She is a marvel of patience and intelligence,' he said, 'and although she can move only on crutches, she is the life of the place. Sometimes when the convalescents are moody or discouraged, she gets up a little "Punch and Judy" show, or helps the Sisters with music and song. I wish you could meet her.'

"My curiosity was aroused. I went to the hospital. I asked the good Sisters about this patient. At once they beamed with pleasure, and launched forth into eulogies of praise. They led me to the convalescent ward, and I saw in the distance a young woman seated in the midst of a little crowd which parted as I approached. She smiled without the least embarrassment, and pointed to her crutches:

" 'These wooden friends of mine, Father, must be my apology for not rising,' she said with a charming grace, 'but I know you are Father So-and-so. I have seen you often, and have heard much of you, too.'

"She had the face of an angel, with fair hair, and eyes like the blue heavens. I stared at her for a moment, I was so amazed. The other patients had slipped away, and the

Sister who was with me had given me a chair. I found that we were alone.

"'You have seen and heard of me before?' I said, in surprise. 'Where, my child? And you know my name? How is this?'

"She folded her hands, which were very white and shapely, and with a beautiful smile on her face, she was silent for a moment. The act and the silence suggested something I could not grasp at once, and then like a flash it occurred to me.

"'Have you ever been on the stage?'

"'Yes, Father.'

"'How does it happen that you are here?'

"'I tried to save some of my companions from danger, and in doing so I fell. I shall never be better,' was the quiet answer.

"My heart went out to her in pity—so young, so beautiful, perhaps a long life before her, and her lower limbs useless. She read my face, and answered my thoughts.

"'You are sorry for me, Father. Do not pity me. I am very happy. Being poor, I had no place to go, until these dear Sisters offered me a home in this hospital. Once, some years ago, I offered myself to God if He would bring to the Faith a noble woman, also an actress, who is now, thanks be to His mercy, a fervent Catholic. But I did

not think then it would be this kind of an offering—a cripple for life! Still, I am satisfied and happy, for she can do much good, much better than I could with my poor talents.'

"A light broke upon me: 'It is Madame C——!' I said. 'I baptized her, and received her into the Church.'

" 'Yes, Father. She told me all about it,' said the cripple, fervently.

" 'And you are the girl whose life behind the scenes won her to the Faith! And I find you here, in this condition!'

" 'Yes, Father. I am the poor girl she condescended to say was the first cause of her conversion. I shall never forget her kindness and graciousness.'

" 'But how is it you are here? Why has she not helped you?'

" 'She has helped me, Father. She does not know how my accident happened. She was far away, in a distant city. She only knows that I have retired from the stage, and am ill. She would do anything for me, she said.'

" 'How did the accident happen?' I continued.

" 'A trap-door was open behind the scenes, and I knew others would be going that way.

I undertook to close it, and lost my balance. It was a dreadful fall, but another girl, who heard me cry out, was close behind, and if I had not fallen, my fate would have been hers. At first I had hopes of recovery, and it was a bitter blow when they broke it gently to me that I would never be well—that I must give up all my aspirations. But, Father, is it not better to suffer and pray that *one gifted soul* may become perfect, and closer to God, than to lead an indifferent life in perfect health?'

"What could I say? Here was the great love of which Christ gave the example. I arose, deeply touched. I laid my hands on the little actress's head, and prayed God to bless her, and to bless that other actress who had been led by her to the kingdom of the faith. I have never seen either of them since."

THE MAJOR'S PROMISE.

IT WAS Decoration Day. In a beautiful cemetery amid flowers that were heaped upon the graves of brave soldiers who had died for their country, surrounded by waving banners and flags, and men in the uniform of the United States Army, within view of a vast crowd of men and women who stood in silent sympathy, a Catholic priest raised his voice and told his listeners what patriotism meant, and what heroism stood for in this great land of ours. In glowing words he lauded love of country, and the men who died to save their country. As the audience listened many a tear was dashed aside, and all heads were uncovered as he spoke the words of Benediction, and the prayers of the Church for the eternal rest and glory of those who had given up their lives to save home and fatherland.

On the outskirts of the crowd an Army officer stood with uncovered head. He was a man of middle age, and the stripes on his uniform and a cane in his hand showed he

had seen service on the field. He was handsome and erect, and when the crowd dispersed and the priest came near him, he raised his hand in military salute and smiled gravely.

The priest smiled also, and stopped to speak to him. After a few words the officer said:

"I believe you are a Catholic priest?"

"I am, Major," was the reply.

"I am not a Catholic, and have no desire to be one, but—I love my country. I have shed my blood for her and would do it again. I knew there would be service in the cemetery, since it is Decoration Day; and because this one is near my home, I came to take part for the sake of the brave men lying under the sod."

The priest raised his hat and extended his hand.

"I honor you, Major, and I salute you with respect! You are too young for the Civil War—did you serve in the Cuban War?"

"Yes, sir! I was in three fights. I almost lost this leg at Santiago. It has been crippled badly ever since!"

"You are very erect for a cripple!" said the priest pleasantly.

"So I am told," said the officer. "I owe my life, as well as my leg, crippled though

it be, to the good nursing and devoted attention of the Sisters, who had charge of the hospital in Cuba into which I was carried.

"I tell you, sir!" said the Major, and his fine face lighted with enthusiasm, "those Sisters were like the angels of God to us, as we were rushed in, bleeding and helpless and dying from the field! The one who took charge of me never seemed to rest, never sat down, never was off duty. Day and night she was there. I have wondered since if she ever ate or slept! She pulled me through, however, and I'll never forget her as long as the breath is in this body. When I was discharged, and able to get about with a crutch, I wanted, naturally, to get home. But before I started I said to her: 'Sister, I am leaving the hospital and returning to the United States; I must thank you for all your kindness to a stranger, also that I am an officer in the United States Army, and possess some influence with our government. Now if I can do any favor for you or for your convent, I wish you would mention it right here. I would like to serve you.'"

"'Thank you, Major,' she said with a smile; 'I do not think you can do any favor for us. We serve the sick and wounded, anywhere, everywhere—whenever our nursing

and poor services are needed. We do not expect any reward, although it is good of you, and noble, to offer it to us.'

"'But, Sister,' I persisted, 'won't you let me do something personally, even to please you—some little thing!'

"'Would you wish to please me?' said the Sister, earnestly.

"'I would do anything for you, Sister,' I cried eagerly—'only name it!'

"'Then,' she said, 'promise me, that when you get home, at some time or other, you will go into a Catholic church, and stay there for a few minutes. Do this on three different occasions. Choose your own time. Simply pay three short visits to a Catholic church in memory of what I have asked you.'

"'Why, that's too easy!' I said. 'But let me assure you there will be no religion in it. I will keep my promise only in order to please you.'

"'That's all I ask,' said the Sister. As she extended her hand I reverently took it and said goodby.

"I came home, and being a retired officer, and quite comfortable, life went on smoothly for some years. I forgot all about my promise. One day, however, as I sat on my porch in the evening, I saw a number of people pass-

ing by, all in one direction. I asked where they were going. I was told the Catholics had a mission in their church on the next block. That's a Catholic church, I thought—and suddenly my promise to that good Sister came up before me, and seizing my cane and hat, I thought I would go, too, and redeem the first third of my promise.

"I went and heard a splendid sermon that set me thinking very seriously about the destiny of man. I was much impressed. The next night I went again, and thus fulfilled the second third of my promise. I learned a good deal about the Catholic Church, and, although I have no desire to be a Catholic, I am much more enlightened about her claims than I ever expected to be."

He paused here and the priest said:

"That was your last visit, Major?"

"Yes. I couldn't get into the crowded church the next night, which was the last of the mission. So although I started to fulfil the last part of my promise to that good Sister, I did not succeed—through no fault of mine. Then Decoration Day came—the memorial day of every true soldier—and I came in here, heard you speak, Father, and find myself talking to you and telling you my history."

They were walking slowly toward the cemetery gate.

"It is early still, Major, and our rectory is quite near," said the priest. "Come and sit on our porch and rest a while. You may have fatigued your lame foot by all this standing, and you need some rest before you start homewards."

The Major went willingly. He was tired, and glad to sit down somewhere. Besides, he liked this young priest, and was nothing loth to talk to him. On the porch, seated and comfortable, he began to speak of religion. The priest was astonished to find he had a child-like, earnest nature to deal with; want of information, and some bigotry had given to the Major the harsh ideas of the Catholic Church that are so often met with, but gradually he had come to see that he was mistaken in some things, and perhaps other matters he doubted might be also satisfactorily explained.

After an hour's conversation he arose. The priest said pleasantly:

"Our church is just at hand. Suppose you go and make the last instalment of your promise to that good Sister! There were *three* visits to a Catholic church promised, were there not, Major?"

"There were three visits," said the Major,

seriously, "and there is no reason why I shouldn't finish off this memorable day. I will 'burn the mortgage,' so to speak, by the entire cancellation of my debt of promise. Where is the church? I will go!"

The priest led him to a side door, opened a pew in front of the sanctuary, and left him.

What silence in this holy place! The little ruby lamp swinging from the ceiling; the altar with its white linens; the vases of lilies on each side of the sacred door shedding a fragrance that reached even the Major. All these things affected him strangely. He had never been so close to the Holy of holies before. Soon a strange peace filled his heart—the vivid sense of a Presence! The hour for which the nun in distant Cuba prayed had come. God's grace came forth from the tabernacle and struck the upright heart of the soldier as the lightning struck Saul on his way to Tarsus.

He believed! An hour passed. The priest returned. The Major was still there. But he rose and followed his new friend. When they were outside the sacred precincts, the priest looked at the Major. His fine face was full of reverent joy.

"Father," he said, "I am a Catholic! Will you instruct me? That good Sister knew

what she was doing when she asked me to visit Christ in His temple."

Need it be said that the priest accepted his task joyfully? The days passed by. The Major was instructed, was baptized, made his First Communion, and is now a fervent convert.

Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar!

THE STOLEN ROSARY.

SUNSHINE and balmy breezes, sweet with the odor of spring blossoms, made the May afternoon like a dream of lost Eden. The Southern city of Richmond was all astir in the beautiful weather; the streets were filled with active men and gay women, who, with alert steps and faces that reflected the cloudless sky, were on pleasure or on business bent.

On one of the side streets stood a little Catholic church. As the sun went down the doors stood wide open, and passersby could look in from the pavement, and note the altars, beautifully adorned with long white tapers and vases of fragrant flowers. There were two altars, one of which was crowned by an exquisite marble statue of the Blessed Virgin, with a halo of electric stars over her head.

The fragrance of roses floated down the aisles and out into the street, and appealed delightfully to the senses of a young girl who was passing. She looked in, and

impelled by curiosity, hesitatingly entered. She had never been in a Catholic church before, and remembering all the dangerous things she had heard of the ways of "Roman Catholics," she slipped into the pew nearest the door, so that in case of danger she might instantly escape.

There was only a small congregation present, and all seemed so earnestly engaged in their devotions that she found herself unnoticed. She breathed freely, and began to listen to what was said, for the whole churchful was repeating at certain intervals some sentences of prayer over and over again. She discovered they were led by a single voice far away, and she located what she thought was the minister, at the foot of the shrine, where the marble Madonna stood like a vision.

In vain she tried to catch the words that were so often repeated; only these came to her ear:

"Holy Mary, Mother of God—!"

Over and over again they fell on the air, and while more words were said, they died away in an indistinct murmur. Unconsciously she murmured them herself: "Holy Mary, Mother of God!"

Suddenly her eyes caught a broken chaplet

lying in the pew before her. She had no idea of connecting it with the prayers she heard, but it was a curiosity, and stealthily she snatched it up and slipped it into her pocket. Noticing a stir among the people, she hurriedly arose, and fled into the street, quite excited at her own bravery in entering a "Popish church" without meeting opposition or challenge, and determined to make an interesting story of the whole adventure that night among her friends.

Sure enough she detailed the episode to a a party of young people that evening, told graphically of her visit to the church, and the scene she beheld, and as some refused to believe her, she drew out the broken rosary to prove her story. The "superstitions of the benighted Catholics" were commented upon, and the rosary was passed from hand to hand in curious examination.

The party dispersed. The girl, taking the chaplet, went to her room at last to retire for the night. She threw the beads on her dressing-table, and then with a sigh of relief that she could pray to her Heavenly Father without such Popish mummery, fell on her knees to say her night-prayers. Strange! They had left her mind! Nothing could she utter but:

"Holy Mary, Mother of God!"

Again and again did she begin the always familiar words of prayer. Her memory was a blank. She could not continue—no words would come but "Holy Mary, Mother of God!" Startled and worried, she tried again, with the same result, and finally had to abandon the effort in disgust and affright.

"It is that old Catholic rubbish that has bewitched me!" she cried, and threw herself on the bed. But she could not sleep; she tossed on her pillow. Over and over and again the murmur of the words in the little church came to her unwilling ears.

The morning found her nervous and jaded from want of sleep and the strain on her mind. She tried to perform her usual duties, but again, like the restless moan of the sea, came the words, as if a far off multitude were saying them, "Holy Mary, Mother of God!"

Half sick with conflicting emotions, she waited until evening. Then in terror and in secrecy, she thrust the broken chaplet into her pocket, and made her way to the Catholic church, to leave the miserable thing where she found it.

She reached the church—no one was there. Hurriedly she entered the pew where she had found the broken rosary, threw it down, and

turned to flee with a relieved heart, when her eyes rested on the marble Madonna, with its pure, exquisite face, and its "meekly folded hands."

"Holy Mary, Mother of God!" fell from her lips unconsciously. And then came the stroke of grace. The scales of prejudice and heresy dropped from her eyes. She believed! The Mother of God was a reality! Christ's Church was a haven of peace founded on a rock! Her soul had been actually pursued by grace. Mary, the Mother of God, had won another convert to her divine Son's Sacred Heart! She became an earnest Catholic, and lived and died an example of that fervor which wins and amazes, while it fills us with admiration.

Oh, blessed Mother of God! Thy fair loveliness is a part of the beauty of paradise. Let some little ray fall on the children of Eve, bereaved of thee, that those who know thee not may find thee, and finding thee love thee, O Holy Mary, Mother of God!

MARCH SEVENTEENTH.

IN MY mail one morning, came the following letter addressed to "Rev. Richard Alexander:"

"DEAR REV. FATHER:

"We are sending to your address a manuscript which was found amongst the papers of the late Rev. J. J. C., pastor of St. James' Church, who died January 11, 1910. Our convent is located in this parish, so they sent it to us to be forwarded to you, as it was the evident intention of our Rev. Pastor that we should do so. It was written in lead pencil. We have taken the liberty of copying it in ink, and herewith transmit it to your care. That the contents are absolutely true, we know, and we wish to have it published only to show how tenderly God deals with upright souls, who sincerely desire to know the truth. Please do not mention our name, nor the town where the occurrence took place.

"Yours in the Sacred Heart,

"SISTERS OF ———."

I read this letter with interest, and then unrolled the manuscript. It was with a feeling of reverence that I followed the record of a conversion full of God's love and mercy, and thought of the joy the good priest felt when he met this ransomed soul so soon after he had brought her to God—so close together were their deaths. May this narrative touch many a doubting heart! Here is his manuscript, exactly reproduced:

"It was in the afternoon of St. Patrick's Day, in the year 1909. I went to the barber-shop for a shave, as I intended to spend the evening with a neighboring priest. While there, my housekeeper sent a messenger to me asking me to come home as soon as possible, as there was an urgent sick call by 'phone. The call came from a nursing Sister of St. Francis, who was at the house of a sick lady, a non-Catholic. She begged me to come at once, saying that the lady was very low; she wanted to be baptized a Roman Catholic, and die in the Faith; that this was a favorable opportunity as her family was very prejudiced, and not thinking her condition as serious as it was, they were absent, leaving her to the nurse's care.

"I hesitated a moment, because the location of the residence was beyond the limits of my

parish, but the Sister urged me, saying that their parish was German, and that an English-speaking priest could handle this case better. I consented then, and went to the house, taking with me the Blessed Sacrament. Two Sisters met me at the foot of the stairs, kneeling for the blessing. They whispered to me that the lady was entirely prepared, instructed and ready for the Sacraments. I went into the room, and after some conversation, found all as the Sisters had said. The lady was a remarkably favored soul, full of faith, and yearning for the Blessed Sacrament. She was about forty-four years old; came from a wealthy Southern family, was highly educated and cultured, a graduate in music, art, etc. Her religious training had been in the High Episcopal Church, and she had been a zealous church-woman, organist and Sunday School teacher. During her residence at times in a village where there was no church she would often gather an assembly at her own house, read the Bible, and talk of God to them, being careful to warn her audience against the superstition and idolatry of the Romish Church, which called on Mary the Virgin at almost every breath. Her minister had been a frequent visitor here during her illness—bringing her much consolation,

and the 'Lord's Supper.' Noticing that his services were not of the highest Episcopal rites, she suggested to him to bring some candles and 'wafers' from a Catholic supply house nearby, and said that she would be pleased to have her little son act as one of his acolytes. To all this the minister had tolerantly acceded.

"I asked her many questions; found her well-instructed, and quite ready for conditional baptism, for Confession, and reception into the Catholic Church, all of which she ardently desired. Her firm belief in the Real Presence was most remarkable; her one desire was to be a Roman Catholic and receive Holy Communion. When I told her that I had the Blessed Sacrament with me, her joy knew no bounds, and she implored me not to delay. I went into the adjoining room, where the non-Catholic nurse, the two Sisters, and her little son were, and brought them into the sick-room, that all might witness the whole procedure. They heard her ask once more for the Sacraments, and witnessed my ministrations of the same. When I left her, after a long visit, her heart was full of joy, which manifested itself on her beautiful countenance.

"As for myself, I was full of wonder and

thanksgiving. When I left the room I asked the Sisters how this strange conversion had occurred. One of them replied as follows:

" 'Father, I will tell you all about it. Surely it is God's mercy, and Our Lady. It did not happen all at once. Last May there was a call by 'phone to our convent saying that at No. ——, on a certain street, there was a sick lady who wished one of the Sisters to come and see her and render her some service, as just then she could not get a suitable nurse. I was sent. At first I went three or four times a week. Soon she found a nurse. After that, I went only when she sent for me. She seemed to like me, and said she looked anxiously for my coming. Nearly always we conversed on religious subjects, especially on Holy Communion, and our dear Blessed Mother. I taught her the "Hail Mary," and gave her a medal. One afternoon she was very much depressed. Her minister had brought "Communion" to her that morning. She told him how devout her feelings were after receiving, to which he answered: "You must not think that this is *Transubstantiation,* or what Romanists call *the Real Presence;* it means only a *remembrance* of the body and blood of Christ." She was startled, and told him she always received fasting,

because she believed she received Christ's true body and blood. Then he said if she believed that she was very near being a Roman Catholic, and she would be a traitor to her Church! I tried to console her by saying that her minister told the truth; that what he brought her was not Christ's body and blood; that the Holy Catholic Church *alone* has the Real Presence of Our Lord, and that our priests alone can give real Holy Communion to the faithful, and bring it to the sick, etc.

" 'For a moment, I felt that my emphatic words shook all the religious principles in my poor listener. She burst into tears, and said: "Sister, you must tell me more; and I want to hear what you believe about the Virgin Mary." I did not say much more, but we sent her Catholic literature: *The Faith of Our Fathers; Truth,* and *The Missionary* from the Apostolic Mission House, Washington, D. C. She also read Rev. Richard Alexander's *Note Book of a Missionary.* The Missionary particularly penetrated her with the deepest reverence for Rev. Father Doyle and his noble missionary priest-writers. Still, human pride and prejudice would not yield to grace. She refused to open her heart to a Catholic theologian for

fear he might convince her of the "terrible truth!"

" 'After she read those precious articles in *Truth* written by Rev. Wm. McGarvey in September and October, 1908, viz: *What is the Real Difference Between Catholics and Protestants?* she became very uneasy, and consulted her minister. His answer did not satisfy her troubled soul. Shortly afterwards he was called to another pulpit, and he never visited her again.

" 'When her friends found our literature in her hands they said with horror that she was on treacherous ground. They begged her to throw away these books as deadly poison; not to allow the serpent to tempt her from the religion of her youth, or she would lose God's grace and her immortal soul.

" 'Recounting this to me, she said that she was so full of doubt and anxiety that she could no longer pray, except the little prayer I taught her—"Hail Mary, full of grace." It was always sweet to her. She wanted to know more about the Blessed Mother, yet was afraid to give herself up to grace. She thought she would wait until her health improved. We redoubled our prayers for her in our convent, for we had become deeply interested in her.

"'After Christmas she asked me to help her to prepare for a journey South to a private Protestant hospital to which her husband had been advised to take her, and place her under the care of a specialist. She went. That evening, I complained to our dear Blessed Mother: "Are you going to allow this soul to be lost?" I said to Our Lady, "Dear Mother Mary, we are praying our hearts sore for that soul, and you are allowing her to go to a Protestant hospital to die! Now, you must take care of her!" And Our Lady surely did.

"'After some weeks the patient was brought home. The special treatment was a failure. She sent for me at once, but I did not go until to-day—the seventeenth of March. I knelt beside the bed clasping her cold hands in mine, for I saw she was near the end. And she whispered this story to me: "Dear Sister, you are right; you have been right all along. I believe in all the doctrines of your Church; I have long since known them, but my pride kept me back until our sweet Blessed Mother came to my assistance!"

"'I started; for devotion to Our Lady was one of the points that made her stumble. She went on:

"'"I don't know whether it was a dream or a vision, or what; but one morning about nine o'clock, I was lying awake on my bed. I was alone, and perfectly conscious. The March sun was coming through my window, when all of a sudden a beautiful lady was standing close to my bed, leaning a little forward toward me, looking at me. I could not utter a word. Her eyes were like brilliant stars. It is impossible to describe her. She was more than beautiful—graceful, majestic. Something that could not be imagined in this world. She said in a sweet, low voice, 'I am the Blessed Virgin Mary;' then: 'and I am the Mother of God! My Son does all things.' She paused. I cried: 'Mother! Mother! I want to belong to you'—but she was gone! She did not come in by the door, nor did she go out that way. I did not see her come or go."

"'The patient then pleaded for me to send for a priest as soon as possible. She wanted to be baptized a Catholic and receive the Sacraments. Our Lady had extinguished her pride, and God's grace overflowed her soul. This is the way, Father, it all came around.'"

Thus ended the Sister's narrative. The priest's manuscript continued:

"Now, Father Alexander, I need not tell you this was the happiest St. Patrick's Day of my life. This favored soul lived only a few days. I was called to her bedside once more, and she breathed forth her pure spirit with these words on her lips: 'My Jesus, mercy.'"

* * * * *

I laid down the manuscript of this dead priest with a feeling akin to awe. They had met in the great Beyond, and no doubt were enjoying God's blessed Presence! They had seen our Blessed Lady, and were singing her praises!

How true it is that grace and light never fail to come to the sincere and upright of heart.

THE BOY'S CONVERT.

"DID you hear that, Walt?"

"Hear what?"

"There's some one crying in that old house."

"Ah, go on! You're kiddin'. Nobody lives there."

"But I heard some one, sure."

"Let's go and see. If you're foolin' me you'd better watch out!"

"I ain't foolin'. Come on!"

The two boys, who were passing a lonely part of the suburbs, where only a few broken-down shacks were visible, went cautiously toward a low frame building that looked like a deserted stable. On tip-toe they slipped to the back and looked in a window whose broken panes were stuffed with rags. As they looked a deep groan seemed to come from the place. It was broad daylight—three o'clock in the afternoon—yet both boys grew white with fear.

"I told you so," whispered Jack. Walter said nothing.

"Are you afraid, Walt?"

"Yes, I'm afraid! Don't let's go any further, Jack."

"Yes, we will! Let's make the sign of the cross and knock at the door."

"Well, *you* knock, Jack."

Both boys made the sign of the cross. They were Catholics, faithful pupils of the parish school, and they were about thirteen years old. If anything, Jack was the younger, but that he was the braver was evidenced by his boldly knocking at the door.

"Come in, for God's sake, whoever you are!" was heard in a muffled, sepulchral voice from within.

This was too much for Walter; he turned and fled like a deer down the deserted road, not stopping until he reached the paved street, where he paused, panting for breath. He could see the little house indistinctly now. There was no sign of Jack. Quite aware, however, that Jack could take care of himself, and being too cowardly to call any one lest he might be blamed, he loitered about, wondering what had happened.

And Jack—what became of him?

When he made the sign of the cross the second time, fear left him, and without look-

ing around for Walter, he pushed at the door. It swung open without difficulty. At first it was so dark that he could not distinguish anything, but as his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, he made out a bed in the corner, and on it the form of a woman. Her thick, white hair was straggling round her face, her lips were cracked and dry, while her eyes seemed to burn him with their intense glow.

"Oh, little boy," she cried, "won't you get me a drink of water? I am dying of thirst."

Jack picked up a cup that was on the chair beside her, and ran out to a pump he remembered seeing near the place. In a minute he was back. The poor creature sat up, seized the cup eagerly, and drank the water without stopping until it was all gone; then with a sigh she laid the cup on the chair, and closed her eyes.

Jack looked at her. She seemed old and miserable. Poverty was stamped on all around her. A little stove, a chair or two, a table, a wooden box that served for a cupboard, and a rag carpet beside her bed—this was the furniture of her home. He took it in at a glance.

She opened her eyes and said to Jack feebly:

"You're a good boy—may God bless you! I have been sick these two days not able to get out of bed, and not a soul has come near me. I was pretty well till then, able to cook a bit and help myself, but when the cold ketched me, I could only lie here and groan."

"That's what Walt and I heard when we were passing," said Jack.

"Was there another one?" said the old woman.

"Yes, but Walt got scared, and made tracks," said Jack smiling.

"What's your name, little boy?"

"Jack Brown, ma'am."

"Well, Jack Brown, you have the blessing of a poor old woman, whose husband is in the poorhouse; but *she* wouldn't go while she had even this roof over her head. I want to die at home, poor as it is."

"Haven't you got any children, or anybody to help you?" said Jack.

"Neither chick nor child. I am a lone creature sure enough, but if I was only on my feet I'd never want. I eat next to nothin' and I make myself a bit of tea when I'm hungry."

"I'll get my mother to fix you something," said Jack. "She's fine. But Mrs.—you didn't tell me your name."

"I'm Mrs. Moss; my name is Ellen, and I'll be thankful to your mother if she can send me something to keep the life in me."

"Well," said Jack, "I'll have to be going. Walt will be lookin' for me. I'll be back, Mrs. Moss, to-morrow, sure. Ain't you afraid all alone by yourself here?"

"No, son—nobody ever comes here. I never have visitors and I never want them. Oh, if I only could get up! Could you get me another cup of water? I don't seem to need anything else. I'm dried up inside."

Jack looked around, found an empty pitcher and taking the cup and pitcher, filled both with water, and brought them in. The poor creature looked her gratitude. Tears coursed down her withered cheeks.

"Don't cry, Mrs. Moss," said Jack cheerfully. "I'll be along early to-morrow, and maybe mother will come too; she's pretty busy in the morning, but I'll bring you something before school. Goodby!"

"Heaven bless you!" said the old woman, as Jack carefully closed the door. Once outside, he gave a big whistle, and with his hands in his pockets skipped down the road, whistling all the way. Soon Walter came from behind a tall sycamore tree.

"What did you see, Jack?" he said in an awed voice, his eyes round and scared.

"Oh, you baby!" said Jack scornfully. "You're a reg'lar sissy. Nothin' but a poor, skinny old woman sick in bed that wanted a drink of water. Didn't you ever see anybody sick in bed? You're a scared-cat, Walt"—and Jack grinned.

"But you were afraid, too," said Walter. "You said you were."

"I was for a minute. Anybody would be, hearin' such groanin', but we both said we'd go in, and when I looked round for you, you had kited down the street on a Marathon! You went like mad, Walt, and that's a fact! But she's a poor old woman all right, and I'm going to ask mother to let me bring her something to eat. She's awful lonesome."

"I bet on you, Jack," said Walter effusively. "Nothin' the matter with you, Jack. But there's our Tom beckoning to me across the street," and, rather relieved, Walter skipped off to his brother.

Jack went home and told his mother. Charitable Mrs. Brown said she would have some hot broth ready on the stove next day, and when he came home from serving Mass (for Jack was a faithful altar-boy), he should take the little bucket, bring it to Mrs. Moss

before school, and tell her his mother would be there during the morning.

Mrs. Brown was a plain, good Catholic woman, with a house full of children and a husband who worked in the neighboring mills. They were comfortable enough while he had steady work and, grateful to God, she never refused to share all she had with those poorer than herself. The account the lad gave her of old Mrs. Moss touched her heart. Next morning, when Jack came home from serving Mass, he found the little granite bucket on the kitchen stove, and carefully carried it to Mrs. Moss. He found her extremely weak, but she greeted the boy gladly.

"Lord bless you, boy! I see you are as good as your word. Tell your good mother I won't be long in this world, and if she has a spark of kindness, to come to see me. I didn't close an eye last night. It was hard, lyin' here, starin' into the darkness."

"I'll tell her," said Jack, as he poured out some of the hot broth, and helped her trembling hands to hold the cup.

It was stimulating and strengthening. The old creature sipped it greedily, and begged for more. Jack gave it to her, and as she seemed to be able to hold the cup now, and told him she was "a heap better," he said

he would go; but, "she must drink it before it got cold." His mother would come for the little vessel. Then he was off, with a hop and a skip, whistling down the street, not knowing that his act of charity was diffusing its holy joy all through his innocent being.

Mrs. Brown visited the poor woman that day, and found everything just as the boy had described it. She had rallied considerably, owing to the nourishing beef tea, and while Mrs. Brown tidied up the room and gave her some clean linen she had brought she listened with maternal pride to the old woman's praises of Jack.

"Yes, he is a good boy; I have eight of them, six boys and two girls. The girls help me considerably. Jack, being the eldest boy, keeps an eye on the younger ones."

"What wouldn't I give to have a child of my own now?" said Mrs. Moss. "But the Good Man took them all."

"The Good Man," was an expression rather new to Mrs. Brown's Catholic ears. She knew her patient was not a Catholic; but she said nothing. Mrs. Moss with quick intuition, resumed:

"I suppose if you had known I was a Lutheran, you wouldn't have much to do with me. Aren't you a Roman Catholic?"

"Yes, we are Catholics, thank God. But it makes no difference what religion a poor sick neighbor belongs to, if I can do a good turn for her. God Almighty is Our Father, isn't He?"

"Yes," said the woman, "but my Church never bothers about me, and after I got my poor husband in the poorhouse because he was paralyzed, they never gave me a penny. Our Church is mostly for the rich," she said bitterly.

"We mustn't talk about that," said Mrs. Brown. "I'll send Jack with broth or a couple of eggs every day, and maybe you'll get around again, and we might get some light work for you. I am so busy at home that I can't promise to come often, but I'll do what I can."

"I'll never forget you!" cried Mrs. Moss, "I'll love you to my dying day, and I'll bless that fine boy of yours, and pray that the Saviour may make him a fine man."

Mrs. Brown smiled, and declared she would have to go, to look after the dinner at home. Placing some milk and some good bread and fruit at the woman's bedside, she left the miserable home in a better condition than she found it, and departed, loaded with blessings from the sick woman. Thank God

for the beautiful charity of so many of our people! They have nothing superfluous, but they share all they have with those poorer than themselves, yes, and they teach their children the nobility of generosity to God's chosen poor, irrespective of creed! How often they put the wealthy to shame, as Christ did in the case of the poor widow of the Gospel!

After this Jack brought beef tea early every morning, or if he went in the afternoon he brought more solid food in a little basket. Then he usually found Mrs. Moss up and seated in an old armchair by the window watching for him. Her face would light up as he approached, and a shower of blessings greet him. Jack began to like the old woman and to take pleasure in visiting her. One morning he found her gasping, her eyes fixed, her face deathly white. Jack was sure she was dying. His first thought was "the priest," but remembering his mother had said she was a Protestant, he thought it would do no harm to say some prayers. So he knelt down at the bedside and began aloud the act of Contrition, then the acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity, the "Our Father" and the "Hail Mary"—the simple prayers of a child. When he paused he saw she was bet-

ter, that her face was assuming a more normal expression. He pressed her to take some of the hot beef tea and assisted her to do so. She revived, and when he left her she was more herself. She told him she had these bad spells at times, and knew they were weakening. Jack, boy like, didn't know what to say. So he said nothing and kept quiet about his scare.

When he went next time it was in the afternoon, and Mrs. Moss was sitting by the window in her old chair. Her face told Jack how welcome he was, and when she shook hands with him, he perched himself on top of the store-box, and pushed his cap on the back of his head. He had lost all sense of shyness and spoke to her quite freely. She was by no means bad-looking when she was "fixed-up," as Jack called it, and to-day, with her clean dress and apron, her white hair, which was unusually abundant, rolled softly away from her forehead, her brown eyes sparkling with the pleasure of seeing him, she was good to look at. Boys know these things as well as grown-ups, and Jack felt a sort of pride in his patient.

"Jack, my boy," said Mrs. Moss, "I can't get those fine prayers you said the other day out of my head. I never knew any prayer

but the Saviour's own prayer, 'Our Father which art in heaven.' Where did you learn them all!"

"Why, I say them every day. I learned them at school. *We* say 'Our Father who'—not '*which.*' Don't you know the 'Confiteor,' and 'Angel of God,' and 'O Sacred Heart'? But I forgot, you're only a Lutheran! What a pity!" and the boy's face was full of such genuine concern that the poor woman couldn't be offended.

Instead, she humbly said:

"Maybe, it is a pity, Jack, but it's all I was raised to. We didn't know much about religion in our house. Would you mind saying those prayers again for me?"

"No, indeed," said Jack, glad to be of some definite use. He took off his cap, knelt down, reverently blessed himself, folded his hands, and began the act of Contrition; and then the other prayers he had said before. Old Ellen watched him closely. His eyes were cast down, his mind absorbed in what he was doing. When he got through, he blessed himself, scuttled up on the box, curled his feet under him, secured his cap, and in a different voice said:

"Aren't they fine prayers? They are as

old as the Catholic Church, and that is the Church that Christ founded."

"You seem mighty sure, Jack," said old Ellen; "who learned you all that?"

"Why, it's in my catechism," he retorted, "and I heard it in instruction class; I've made my First Holy Communion. I'm thirteen years old, you know."

"I don't seem to know much about it. I never heard tell of the things you have so glib on your tongue."

Jack was touched. He only saw an old woman—ages older it seemed than he was, and she actually did not know the prayers his little brothers said every day, and had no religious teaching at all. What a terrible state of ignorance! Why, he, he could help her!

"Say, Mrs. Moss, look here," said he with animation, "I'm going to bring down my catechism, and my prayer-book, and I can read them to you."

"Oh, my good boy!" cried she, "will you really? Won't it be a great bother to you instead of going to your play? But, oh, I'd like it mighty much. I often wonder if the Good Man in heaven ever thinks of a poor body like me!"

"If you mean our blessed Lord," said

Jack, lifting his cap, "I never heard Him called such a name as you say; but if you mean Him, why, He loves people like you. The older they are, the poorer, the sicker, the more He loves them, I know that for sure. Mother says so, and the Sisters say so, and Father Alexander says so! I'll bring down my books to-morrow; so be ready, Mrs. Moss!" and Jack skipped down from the box and was off.

Jack was as good as his word. Next day he brought the little catechism and read from the first page on through several chapters. The poor woman constantly interrupted him with questions, and he answered them correctly. He felt he was doing something for a human soul. The missionary instinct was there and he followed it as the Wise Men followed the Star.

He never missed a day now. He went through the catechism, at least the Commandments and the Sacraments, and no pupil had a more earnest teacher, nor ever had a teacher a more eager pupil. Old Ellen was slowly seeing the light. God's grace was coming to her poor benighted soul. At last she said:

"Jack, do you know what I've been thinking all these days?"

"No," said Jack, "what is it?"

"That it is time for me to be baptized and become a Catholic."

"Do you mean it?" said Jack, jumping up. He had not realized all the thoughts and introspection that took place in old Ellen's mind and heart during the long hours he was not there.

"I mean it and I want it!"

"Then," said Jack, "I've got to bring Father Alexander to you."

"Bring whoever you please. I am longing to feel the Lord's presence."

So Jack came to me.

I was amazed when I heard the particulars I have described; and made all haste to visit poor Mrs. Moss. I saw at once, although she was creeping about doing her own little chores, that her hold on life was precarious. I questioned her, and found that my altar-boy, Jack Brown, had really and truly brought this soul to the door of the Church! She was *his* convert, and there was I, within a few squares of this poor creature's wretched home, unconscious of her existence. She begged me to baptize her, as she had not been baptized even in the Lutheran Church, and I promised I would next day. Then I visited Jack's mother, who told me all she knew about the case: how she had straightened

things up at Mrs. Moss's house, how she had sent Jack every day with nourishment, and who now promised that she would go again and fix up for the Baptism.

The next day poor old Ellen was baptized. Jack stood godfather, and he was as reverent as an angel. After a few more visits, I gave her First Holy Communion. Jack was there and read the prayers of thanksgiving when I left.

It seemed as if God had prolonged her life only to complete the salvation of her soul. She grew visibly quieter and weaker after her reception of the Sacraments, and one afternoon I administered Extreme Unction. Jack was present. I could see by his serious boyish face that he was deeply impressed. Her loving worship of the little fellow was touching. It made her happy even to see him in the room. Thinking it wiser not to take chances in her condition, I gave her the last absolution, and a few words of comfort, and told her I would be there early next morning.

I went after Mass and found Jack on his knees at the bedside. The little fellow did not stir as I opened the door. One look was enough. Old Ellen was dead. Her face was as white as marble, her eyes were closed,

and a tender smile, like a mother's, was on her lips! One would not know her, so peaceful and sweet was her countenance. Her abundant white hair was pushed back on her forehead, and lay on the top of her head; it gave a wonderful dignity to her serene features, as if she wore a silver crown. Jack looked up, and said, with a big sob choking his voice:

"Father, she died as I came in. She just kind of smiled and said: 'God bless you, Jack,' and then she shut her eyes. I couldn't believe she was dying. Is she really dead, Father?"

I put my arm around the little apostle.

"Yes, Jack. She is dead and in heaven, and, my boy, you have been the big help that got her there!"

We learned from the authorities at the poorhouse, or county-home, that her husband was dead; so we buried poor Ellen with High Mass, and gave her a place in our Catholic cemetery. Jack and I were the only mourners who stood beside her humble grave.

HIS EARTHLY THRONE.

IT WAS the mission time, and after my sermon I had come from the church to the rectory. As I passed the parlor I saw an elderly lady standing there alone, as if she wished to speak to some one. I addressed her and gave her a chair.

She was a woman whose kindly face bore an expression of serene content and mother-love, with the lines of sorrow sweetened by religion. She was no longer young, but her bearing commanded profound respect and deference. After a few commonplace remarks about the sermon, I waited for her to speak.

"When I hear of God's goodness to the world, Father," she said, "I cannot help reviewing the events of my own early life. They were so remarkable, so filled with divine mercy, so unusual in their trend, that they were evidences of the purest goodness and love of God, and worthy of being recorded for the edification of the skeptical and the worldly. I want to tell you something about them. Have you time to listen?"

The address and language of this sweet old lady charmed me. I took a chair and bade her tell me her story; I was interested already.

She then mentioned that she was a convert; her husband had died but recently. God had blessed them with thirteen children, all of whom had done well and were faithful in their duty to God and to her.

"During all those long years, Father," she said, "my husband and I were lovers. He never seemed to think I was growing old, and his courtesy and devotion were the light of my existence. When he died that light went out, and I, too, would have died were it not for my faith—that faith given to me through so much tribulation.

"I want to tell you, Father, that I am the daughter of a Methodist Bishop, reared in strictness, and saturated with the Bible. I was well educated and given the best that the old-fashioned days could offer in solid home training and academy instruction. *Roman Catholics,* however, and their creed, were the 'scarlet woman' of horror, in my mind—I knew none of them, and if I accidentally touched one, I felt contaminated. Bigotry in those days was more bitter than it is now.

"My life was happy and peaceful. As I

grew near twenty, I met my future husband. He was a young lawyer, one of our neighbors, bright, clean, ambitious. My heart went out to him in answer to his love. In time we were married by my father and no young couple ever began life with more enthusiasm and devotion than we. I was willing to go anywhere as long as he was at my side, and so I agreed— almost without a pang, in the greatness of my love for him—to leave my home town, my family and my friends, and go to the West with him and his father's family to seek wealth and fame. His father, too, was a lawyer, and they were deeply affectionate and devoted to each other and to the new daughter-in-law.

"We were going to live on a ranch, and they had made negotiations, investing every penny they had in a perfectly beautiful and immensely fertile piece of land adjoining a flourishing town—land that came up to the very doors of an old-time adobe church —a Catholic church, of course.

"And here the blunder was made that brought sorrow and misery and bitterness on our lives and threw us into poverty. How those two bright lawyers, my husband and his father, took such steps without acquiring all the information necessary to their negotia-

tions, is a mystery to every one to this day; but as it happened, I must believe it to have been one of the inscrutable dispensations of Providence.

"We took possession of the land, caring nothing for privations. We built ourselves a house and barn and prepared the ground. How happy I was! I went singing about my work; my strong young hands counted the daily inconveniences of life as nothing when I looked forward to the evening return of my beloved husband—to his hearty greeting and embrace. And then my approaching motherhood sent a rosy glow over the whole world. We were so happy that we cared nothing for the rumors and reports that now and then reached us about the title to our land.

"Suddenly a heavy cloud fell upon us like a thunderbolt—"

She paused in her narration, and we were both silent. I was becoming deeply interested, and did not say a word, wondering what was next. She soon continued her story.

"Father," she said, and her eyes glowed and her cheeks flushed, "I can speak of it calmly enough now, but in those days I was like a lioness in fury and indignation. One

day the United States marshal served a notice on us that we were on the land of the Catholic Church. The treaty of Guadaloupe-Hidalgo, by which the Mexican War was ended, guaranteed all church property. Because we had built on church land (a fact of which we were unaware) our house, our barn, our ranch were church property. The priest of that Roman Catholic church claimed all. We were beggared if the Roman Catholic Bishop and his priest won the case. We were formally sued for trespass and ordered off the land. You may be sure our two lawyers—my husband and his father—contested every inch.

"The suit was long and bitter. The days were full of trouble, misery and forebodings. Ruin was staring us in the face, for every cent my husband and father-in-law had had been expended in the buildings and implements for farming, and in the preparations they had made for a prosperous settlement. How I hated the Roman Catholics! The name priest or bishop, was enough to fill my whole soul with anger.

"Under these circumstances my first child was born. I felt that a new responsibility had come to my husband and myself, and now that poverty was hanging over us the sweet

joy that should have come with my baby was chilled with apprehension.

"My love for my husband, my sympathy with his troubles, absorbed my whole soul, and he appreciated my devotion. Father, can you imagine how we felt under such circumstances? Could you blame me that I hated everything Catholic?"

"Indeed, my dear friend," I replied, "I could hardly imagine a position more trying. It is truly a wonder that you ever became a Catholic."

"Ah! Father, you are right," she rejoined, "and that is what makes my conversion, and that of my dear husband so miraculous. Let me tell you how it came to pass, and you will praise the Lord with me and understand my desire to make known to the world the wonders God wrought in my behalf. I used to go over to the village on little errands, and often when I was lonely I took my infant in my arms for a walk in the gay sunshine, although my heart was aching. I always had to pass the adobe church. I did so with my face averted.

"Once I glanced at it with a sort of curiosity—for there was no one to see me, then I stared at it inquisitively, then went around it to discover something to mock at. But,

instead I found a grace and humble beauty about its proportions that I hated to acknowledge. The door was always unlocked, as I found one day when I cautiously tried it, and I passed in. I could see nothing—it was so dark. I fled hastily. But I thought about it constantly—at home, at my work; when I awoke at night, something drew me with a force I could not understand to the door of that hated little Catholic church. In vain I tried to grow angry, assuring myself it was treason to my husband and his family to harbor a thought, even a curious thought—about a place of worship—especially *this* place which was bringing misery and trouble upon our young lives. It was useless. When my husband and the men went to work I would leave the baby asleep with its nurse, and walk quickly down the lane until I came to the church. I would look at it, walk around it, meeting no one. At last one day I boldly opened the door and again walked in.

"A cool silence filled the place. I saw nothing but a bright red star half way to the ceiling at the upper end. There was not a sound. I went on, trembling. Near a portion that was railed off I saw one or two Indian women squatted on their heels, their

hands clasped, their eyes fixed on a little door on a long white table hung with white linen. They never heeded me—never even turned their heads.

"I sat down on a bench and looked long at that door. And then, Father, a strange sweet peace came over my troubled spirit, an overwhelming sense of the nearness of God, like the touch of a strong and soothing hand. Father, I BELIEVED. I knew the Lord was there. In one instant the prejudices of years fell off like scales. All my life's traditions, all my horror of the superstitions and idolatry of the Catholic Church fell away like ashes. A miracle had been wrought in me. *Jesus* in the *Blessed Sacrament* had drawn my tired heart to His divine breast, and—I was a Catholic—a believer in the Blessed Eucharist.

"It seemed to me that I could linger there forever, drinking in the comfort my thirsty soul was longing for. Troubles, heart aches, poverty, the pending lawsuit, my husband's anger, my own bitterness, all, everything was swept away by the torrent of sweetness the Divine Presence poured into my soul. The red lamp shed its crimson glow on the motionless women, on the white altar, on my bowed head. I fell on my knees and

my heart cried out, 'My Lord and my God!'"

She stopped; the tears had gathered in her eyes. My own heart had risen like a lump in my throat. Oh! the goodness, the yearning love of our dear Lord—but I said nothing. She continued:

"Father, do you not wonder that I say that my conversion was a marvel? It began then and there, forever. I left the church with the peace of faith singing in my heart. Secretly I hurried home, my burdens lifted. Again and again, as the days passed, I returned. I learned to pray.

"But I did not dare to tell my husband and father-in-law. They were absorbed in their trouble. The litigation in the United States courts was raging furiously; and at home the words Roman Church, priest, bishop, lands and treaty, were sounded in terms of execration from morning till night. How could I dare to say that for weeks I had been daily visiting that church, and the altar where I firmly believed my God reposed day and night? How could I do it?

"The suit ended; we were beaten and ejected.

"With money I had we managed to tide over the crisis, to get on our feet again,

and life went on, while I, speaking to no one, sought out the little church and found my consolation, my peace, in kneeling before the altar—the altar of that religion whose ministers I had heard had robbed us and driven us into the street. I could not think of it—it did not seem to trouble me there. The Lord Himself held me in His arms, and spoke to me in the depths of my soul. 'Daughter,' He said, 'I am thy God who dwells here on this altar, and My religion is the Catholic religion and none other.'

"It did not surprise me; I was not agitated; I knew it was true; no argument was needed; I knelt and adored; my heart cried aloud, Yes, Lord, I do believe!

"I went about my home with a new joy in my heart. I had been taught by God Himself. Not a doubt remained.

"But the making known of my belief! Oh, Father, it was a long struggle—an agonizing struggle—between God's grace and my husband and father-in-law. They fought harder for my soul than they did for the ranch. I shudder when I look back to it all even now. I was forbidden, yes, hindered, from approaching that little church so dear to me. I suffered all that a woman could suffer for her convictions, but my heart was so full of calm

and peace that I bore it all with serenity; nay, gladness. Even my husband marvelled, for it was long and bitter.

"The Church won, even as she did in the legal suit, and in the end God shed the light of faith on my dear husband's soul. He abjured Protestantism and joined me. It took time and prayer and patience and long suffering.

"During this I had never spoken to a priest. At last I stole away to San Francisco, found one, and was received into the Church. My husband followed. Our thirteen children have all been baptized. My life has had its share of trials, but my Faith, the heavenly comfort of my religion, has supported me all through, and will I know support me to the end. Tell me, Father, is not my story a marvel of grace?"

* * * * *

Her eyes were wet, her face glowing as she finished. She looked like one of the saints of old. I felt like kneeling for her blessing—this holy woman in the world, whose life had been a beautiful record of God's lavish grace corresponded to amid the vicissitudes of the ordinary life. She had done angels' work in the guise of common things.

THE MAN FROM KERRY.

A LONG time ago, a young Irishman from the County Kerry enlisted in the English army and was sent with his regiment to the Crimean war. He was a hot-headed fellow, warmhearted, devoted to his country; in fact, wildly enthusiastic when Ireland was even mentioned, and brave to a fault.

On one occasion, however, a party of privates of whom he was one became noisy over a game of cards, and got into trouble. They were put in irons for the night, and when morning dawned, Cormac and his comrades were brought before their colonel, fined, and dismissed with the stern reprimand military obedience demands when army rules are broken.

After their punishment they were sent to their barracks, but first they were ordered to cheer for the Queen. Cormac foolishly refused, and for this second misdemeanor he was flogged for contempt. He did not utter a word, but took his medicine like a man! Released, he went back to his company burn-

ing with indignation and shame, and with a bitter heart determined to leave the army as soon as his time was up. This he did, returning to Ireland, and although he loved his native sod, the memory of what he considered an outrage on his manhood rankled so deep that he set out for America—the land of the free—as soon as he could get together the money for his passage.

His soldier-life had lessened his hold on practical religion, but not on his faith, for he always said he was a Catholic. When he arrived in America, he devoted his whole energy to the accumulation of a fortune and the building up of a home. Early and late he worked, giving no time to God or to the needs of his immortal soul; but he prospered, was successful as the world goes, and looked about for a wife. By God's mercy he married a good Catholic girl, and gathered a family about him who were all baptized and reared Catholics. Their father never went to church. This was a source of great pain and sorrow to his devoted wife and daughters.

Once the pastor of his parish called to see him, and Mr. C——, acutely conscious that he was not living according to his convictions, nor in acknowledgment of the faith of

his childhood, told the priest that he did not mean to bother about religion as long as he was honest and humane, a kind husband and parent. He intimated to the pastor that he would be thankful to be "let alone!"

His poor wife, mortified and ashamed, tried to excuse him to the pastor, but Mr. C—— cut short her excuses, bidding her not to meddle, that he meant every word he said.

The pastor took his leave. "Nothing can be done, except by prayer," he said.

From thenceforth mother and daughters besieged heaven with prayers for the father's conversion. Especially did they have recourse to the Sacred Heart. The months passed by and no effect was visible; the father was more obstinate than ever, and even found fault when the family went to church at any other time than to Mass on Sundays.

One autumn an unusual "cold snap" occurred. Many persons were unprepared for cold weather and were taken ill. Among them was Mr. C——. Although he fought desperately against his illness he was obliged to go to bed, and pneumonia set in. When he was prostrate and the physician had announced the gravity of the case, his favorite little daughter with tears besought him to

allow her teacher, who was a Sister in the parish school, to visit him and pray for his recovery. To please his little girl the man consented. When the two Sisters of Mercy entered the room Mr. C—— received them kindly, but told them they must not talk to him about religion. He said he would die as he had lived, though they could pray all they liked!

The Sisters saw he was not going to recover, and one of them begged him to allow her, as a favor, to pin a Sacred Heart Badge on his breast. He made no objection, and then the Sisters knelt down, and, surrounded by the broken-hearted wife and family, said the Litany of the Blessed Virgin for the recovery of his health. In their secret hearts they prayed more for the recovery of grace for his poor soul! Mr. C—— lay quiet with his eyes closed, apparently unmoved. When the prayers were over, the Sister arose and going to the bed, took the sick man's hand.

"Good-by, Mr. C——. I am sorry that one of my own countrymen should want to die without the Sacraments!"

The simple directness of the sentence, and the almost tearful earnestness of the speaker, struck home to the sick man's heart.

"One of your countrymen?" he echoed. "Are you an Irish woman, Sister?"

"I am from the County Kerry, not far from your mother's home, where you were born," said the nun.

A strange light shone in the sick man's eyes. He grasped the nun's hand and held it while his face worked convulsively.

"God help me, Sister!" he said, as the love of country awakened the embers of faith under the crust of years. "No one will ever say I refused a Kerry woman anything she asked me."

"Then," said the Sister, seizing the moment when nature helped grace, "in God's name go to confession and make your peace with Him. The land of our birth must never have a record of one of its sons refusing to see a priest on his deathbed. Go to confession this night and we will storm heaven for your precious soul!"

"I will, Sister! I will!" cried the man. "Send the priest to me!"

The Sister gave a glance at the daughter who had brought her to the bedside. The girl fled from the room, and with a breathless agitation and excitement I could not at first understand, burst into my study:

"Oh, Father, come, come to my papa! He is going to die and he wants the priest!"

I sprang up instantly, grasping my oil-stocks, and followed her. The scene that met my eyes in that chamber almost moved me to tears. Mr. C—— was lying back on his pillows, his hands clasped, his eyes closed, while tears trickled down his sunken cheeks. The two Sisters were softly reciting the Rosary, which was answered by the weeping wife and children. When I entered he stretched out his hands:

"Father, do you think God will forgive a poor sinner who has not bent his knee for thirty years?"

"Indeed He will, my son! There shall be joy in heaven because of what you have said, more than if ninety-nine just were singing God's praises, when you return to your Father's house."

It was surely a case of God's infinite patience and love, the positive answer to prayer, and the happy accident of the good nun mentioning the Irish home that was entwined with the roots of his heart. He was a completely changed man, a true penitent, and received the Sacraments with edifying devotion. He died in a few days, peaceful and resigned, the good Sister who had been

so truly his friend reading the beautiful prayers of the Church for the dying. The little badge of the Sacred Heart which they took from his breast when his heart was stilled, is a precious relic in the family, and devotion to the Sacred Heart is most fervently observed by mother and children, whose faith is strengthened more than ever by this wonderful conversion.

O loving Heart of Christ, may we ever cling to Thee, and in all our anxieties and trials may this be the prayer of our souls:

"Sacred Heart of Jesus! we place our trust in Thee."

"GOD CALLED ME."

WE who have lived our lives in the Church of God know little of the struggles and falterings of those who have found the truth after many years. No romance, no tale of fiction, can surpass in pathos, interest, or wonder, some of these life stories. I heard one from the lips of a recent convert, and she has allowed me to reproduce it, suppressing names as much as possible. I shall give it mostly in her own words.

It was a beautiful evening, and we were seated on a wide veranda in full view of a range of Pennsylvania hills that rose up against the sky, eternal and sublime in their immutability. The peace and calm were indescribable. I think my narrator felt this as she unfolded her story. With great simplicity she began:

"You have asked me, Father Alexander, to tell you something of my life. I am glad to do so. Some lives are stranger than fiction, and I think my life has been unusual, at least in its varied incidents. If any one

had told me in the long ago that I should ever recount them to a Roman Catholic priest in the security and friendship with which I am now speaking to you, I would have treated that person as an inventor of myths and fables."

She smiled and then continued:

"I was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. My mother was born in Queensferry, eight miles from Edinburgh, in the house which is described in the first chapters of Robert Louis Stevenson's novel, 'Kidnapped.' She was the sixth child and only daughter of her parents. Her father was minister of the Kirk in Queensferry for thirty-seven consecutive years, and was known as 'the gude minister.' He was a most devout man, a deep student and a learned scholar. With his six sons he educated 'six sons of gentlemen,' in all that phrase implies in Great Britain, and my mother was educated with them like a boy. Latin and Greek, French, German and Italian were her daily portion from early childhood; ancient and modern history; the grammar, of course, of all the languages besides English, and something of the sciences. But, as she hated mathematics, these were dropped as soon as she had courage to rebel. Her mother (my grandmother) was also the daughter of

a minister of the Kirk and had been also largely educated by her father, but from the age of fourteen to nineteen she attended the 'Miss Primrose Boarding School for Young Ladies,' a famous finishing school described in one of Miss Ferrier's novels.

"My grandmother was an exceptionally fine musician, and also had a beautiful, well-cultured voice. My mother had the advantage of this education and played excellently; her voice was sweet and tender. My grandmother was extremely devout, well fitted to be the daughter of one minister and the wife of another, noted in their generation for piety and scholarship. I am going into these details, Father, to show that a religious strain is often a matter of heredity.

"My father was born in London. His father was the son, grandson and great grandson of a long line of merchantmen—that is, shipowners, who traded with foreign countries (India largely). My grandfather was a younger son, and became a civil engineer and a 'Royal Geographer';—making maps for the government. He was one of the pioneers in the railroad field, and surveyed the first railroad in Spain. My brother, who was in Spain last year, says they are still using their first equipment in

some places. Grandfather might have died a railroad king, but he lost his wife in childbirth, with their child, and in his sorrow gave up all his interests. He bought an estate in Queensferry and retired there with a widowed sister. He gradually became morose and eccentric, although sought out by celebrities for his extraordinary knowledge on all sorts of subjects. Louis Agassiz often stayed several weeks at 'Ross Hill,' while, too, Herschel and a long list of others came. So my father and his four brothers had a far broader education than their tutor or their grandfather gave them out of books. The boys were educated at home.

"My father and mother knew each other as children and were married young. Two years after their marriage, or shortly after I was born, they removed to Liverpool, where my two brothers were born. There were only three of us, one girl (myself) and two boys. In Liverpool the kirk was at a great distance, so my mother, who liked the Anglican Church service, went to the nearest church, and in it my two brothers were baptized. My father, when he inherited his share of the paternal estate, came to America on the invitation of his two brothers and became a cotton broker, but he was ruined in

the Civil War. We had all come to America when I was only nine years old.

"They called me a precocious youngster, and I guess I was, for I really had no childhood, being the constant companion of my highly educated grandmother. I read the Bible before I was five and wrote well, as my copybooks show. I was better versed in religion than fairy tales. I was especially fond of the Psalms and knew many of them by heart; their sonorous rhythm attracted me more than anything I knew. I often think how strange and mature I must have seemed to the school children of those days! I went to the grammar school with girls of sixteen and had a wider knowledge of European history than was then taught in the high school. All this was home training and inheritance, and thus I had no tendency to self-conceit, which was frowned down at home as insufferable. As it was, all I knew was just my natural life, and it never occurred to me that others were different. I hated the schools, and I hated being there with boys. I didn't care to make girl friends because my mother was my 'chum,' and I rarely felt the need of another.

"As it is of interest to trace an inherited tendency to religious devotion, so it is to

look back to my first knowledge of anything Catholic.

"Cardinal Newman mentions finding in an early school book his initials, surrounded by a rosary, although at that time he had never seen or heard of a rosary. My first recollection of realizing the existence of the Catholic Church was when I was twelve years old. I had the early impression that 'Catholics' were entirely beneath social recognition, and I remember with what a curious feeling I came to regard a lady I used to meet every morning on my way to school. Whatever was the weather, I always met her. She had attracted me from the first, because she had the look of my grandmother, a perfect gentlewoman, quiet, dignified, gentle, calm and unhurried. I asked questions about her, for I began to love her. I discovered to my amazement that she was the mother of a big, bluff elder in the Presbyterian Church which we attended, but that she was a Catholic, a convert to the Roman Church. Every time I saw her I would say to myself, 'Oh! *how,* and *why,* did *you,* lovely woman, come to believe in the Roman Catholic Church?' I had an idea that one had to be *born* a Roman Catholic.

"Then I remember going one day with another girl into a Catholic Church. It must have been some great feast day. It was in the summer, and we pushed through the crowd until in some way we got into a gallery and looked down on the altar. I remember a bell ringing and the people bowing low, and I saw a man near me strike his breast. I was filled with wonder and awe. I wanted to go away and I wanted to stay. I did not tell my mother where I had been. There was a large monastery in the town, Franciscan, and also a convent. As I grew older I used to meet the quiet, gentle-faced nuns on the cars, and I used to wish I was a nun, to be out of the changes and perplexities of this world.

"For my troubles began early enough. At thirteen I looked eighteen; at fourteen a man of twenty-eight was my suitor.

"About this time my mother had grave cause to dislike the action of the Presbyterian Church, so she left it and, to my great satisfaction, went to the Episcopal Church. I had known no other until we came to America, and I disliked the bare Presbyterian service. So my mother and I were confirmed together when I was about fifteen. Now, although I went to church every Sunday and liked the

service, I found I had nothing left of the religious devotion I had imbibed from my grandmother. My head was full of company and having a good time. I graduated from high school at sixteen, and put in all my time cultivating my voice and taking dramatic lessons; for I had made up my mind to go on the stage. When I was between nineteen and twenty, the one friend of my life for whom I cared quarreled with me about it. But I got letters to influential people and went to New York. I got a part in a D'Oyley Carte opera company, but almost immediately I met the one whom I eventually married, and he persuaded me to give it all up and go home. This I did.

"We were married in 1882. When I married, although I did not at first love my husband as I did my former friend, yet I cared for him sincerely, and was absolutely true to him in thought, word and deed. After the children came, I had no other ambition in the world than to be a good wife and mother. I bore six children in ten years; two little girls died in early infancy, but I took my brother's daughter when her mother died. She was then three years old. I have raised five children. My oldest boy was a difficult character, with a violent temper. At fourteen he

enlisted in the navy. It was an overwhelming grief to me, but it was best.

"I fretted over this and many other things, for my life was not smooth. Then a friend asked me if I would like to go with her to make a retreat. A retreat? I only knew it meant some place where for a few days I could be alone and not be obliged to speak to any one. The retreat was at Kemper Hall, a large boarding school conducted by the Sisters of St. Mary, an Episcopalian sisterhood. Father H——, of the Episcopal Order of the Holy Cross, was the conductor, and there I heard for the first time the doctrine of the Real Presence, the Seven Sacraments, the importance and necessity to the spiritual life of sacramental confession, prayers for the dead, the invocation of the saints and that the Episcopal Church was 'truly Catholic.'

"Father H——'s meditations were deeply spiritual. I fairly devoured his teaching. I made my first confession, and returned home like one recreated. At the close of that retreat, June 24, 1899, I offered my life to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar —I laid my will there. I took the mother of St. Augustine as my patron, and vowed myself to a life of devotion for my son and all my children.

"Each year after that I went to retreat. Every month I went to confession. I took upon myself all sorts of 'works' and, in fact, went beyond my strength. In August of 1899 I was seized with violent illness, terminating in nervous prostration. I was six months in my room and six months in a sanitarium.

"I came home to find a very distressing state of affairs, which changed the whole complexion of my life. Had it not been for my love and devotion to our blessed Lord I must have lost my mind. I began going every day to my church, where I prayed as never in my life before. Finally (at my age) I went to a business college, studied day and night, and was soon able to take a position as secretary and stenographer. Only God knows all my mental anguish during those months! Before going to my work I went to church each morning, so that Father B—— (he is now in the true Church) could have a daily 'celebration.' Episcopalians are afraid to say 'Mass.' Every evening I went in and knelt before a little altar where the Blessed Sacrament was supposed to be reserved. I was one of a mere handful who believed in 'Catholic teaching,' and Father B—— became my confessor, director, and friend.

"When Father H——— first taught me

the Catholic doctrines of his creed, he strenuously impressed on his hearers that the Episcopal Church was Catholic, in spite of her Protestant name, and presented historical and theological arguments to prove it. Yet, even in the first ardor of my acceptance of Catholic doctrines, my mind was so full of argument *against* the claims for Catholicity made by the Episcopal Church that I had continually to fortify myself with literature proving its Catholicity. I myself —the real Ego—was *never* convinced, but I forced myself to accept the proofs presented because Father H—— and Father B——, my learned confessor and director, accepted them. I felt that it would be rash presumption to doubt where these learned men, my teachers, accepted.

"Sometimes the doubts were so strong that I had to cry out for special help. You may remember I told you of the special visit Father H—— made to me. I told him all my doubts and questionings without reserve. I again forced Ego to accept his answers, but Ego was never convinced.

"To my mind, the very first note of Catholicity was wanting from the Episcopal Church. A Church to be Catholic must be *one*. Hence, in all the years I accepted and

practiced Catholic doctrine, I had to strangle my doubts of the Catholicity of the Episcopal Church. Sometimes I really thought the doubts were forever dead—then perhaps a heated Anglican argument *for,* revived to more active life than before all my doubts *against.* I can say in all simple truth that no one ever tried harder to be loyal to the Episcopal Church than I. I have lately been re-reading Cardinal Newman's 'Apologia,' and I find that all unknown I have trod the same path as 'the noblest Roman of them all.' I may say further: In all the years which have passed since I accepted Father H——'s presentation of Catholic faith I have never read a single anti-Anglican book. Everything I read was entirely pro-Anglican, and my weekly diet was *The Living Church,* from cover to cover.

"But within the past eighteen months I removed to the great Western city which is now my home. I knew there were only a few Episcopalian churches where there was 'Catholic service,' without this fact seriously disturbing me, until I made the change from the devotional surroundings Father B—— had so persuasively fostered. Arrived in the city, I was like a bird without a nest.

I tried faithfully to continue the life of devotion on which Father H—— had started me and which I had followed without break throughout more than a decade of years. But in my new home the necessary environment was not supplied by the Episcopalian Church. Father H—— had taught me that confession was necessary to spiritual growth (and who dares deny it who once has practiced it?). In this city one scarcely dares speak the words, 'the Real Presence.' Only a 'memorial.' Baptism a necessity? 'That's one of the High Church clergy fads.' (I heard the rector of a large and fashionable church say this in the course of his sermon the last time I was in an Episcopal church.)

"I often thought of the hours I had spent in the silent darkness before an altar on which a red light perpetually burned; but no Episcopal church in the city allowed 'such Romish practices.' The hours thus spent in the years past had helped me in many a trial of sorrow or perplexity. Do you wonder then that in my hunger and loneliness I went to the Catholic Cathedral and knelt for hours where I *knew without doubt* my dear Lord dwelt in His Sacramental Presence? But I was not present at a single service of any kind. I did not speak to a

single human being. I read no 'Roman literature,' and the Anglican 'Treasury' was my only prayer-book.

"I had no more idea of leaving the Episcopal Church than you have of leaving the Catholic Church at this moment, Father. I only went to the Cathedral to worship my dear Lord in His Sacramental Presence as I had been taught by Father H—— and other Anglicans. On one Saturday afternoon, July 3, 1909, I went to the Cathedral to rest. My business life had been for some time exceedingly and unusually difficult, and in my domestic life were many perplexities. How I craved confession and more even than this—direction! How I needed these spiritual helps! So I went on this afternoon, the end of a particularly trying week, and knelt for a long time before the crucifix, close to the beautiful altar dedicated to the Sacred Heart, and, looking up, I realized what a help to our poor, weak understanding are the representations of our dear Lord. I looked up into that tender face and saw those outstretched arms, and I could almost hear the voice, 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden,' as I gazed into that pain-stricken face and thought of what He bore for me.

"I knelt on, taking no note of time—not praying much, but just *comforted.* Later in the afternoon I went and sat in the first pew in front of the high altar, still not praying much or thinking much, just peaceful and comforted, like a tired child in its mother's lap. Almost idly I watched the people come and go, young and old, men and women, girls and boys, rich, poor and the large middle class—all represented in the procession of humanity who come to lay their cares, sorrows, hopes, desires, whatever these may be, before their Friend, who is always ready to listen.

"At last a distinct thought stood out in my mind. In what other church could one see such a procession—a church where no service is going on?

"The shadows lengthened, the priests left the confessionals, the church was empty. Empty! with the all-pervading Presence! I was conscious of nothing else. No, I cannot explain it any further or tell any more except that I *knew* God's will for me, and with the Blessed Mother I said: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word.'

"That was my conversion..

"When it began to grow dark, I went

slowly down the long aisle; and so home like one in a dream. I said nothing. I 'pondered it in my heart.' The next day, Sunday the fourth, I went as usual with the children to the Episcopal church. The bishop of the diocese made a stump speech for tariff revision. I have no time in my busy life for politics, so I cannot say just what the point was about which he was so wrought up, but it is the simple bald truth that his sermon was about tariff revision, and that he asked his congregation to offer their intention for a 'proper revision of the tariff.' How I thanked God that He had called me *home!* The last Sunday I was in an Episcopal church the rector of a large and fashionable congregation made a furious onslaught on the 'fads' of the 'High Church clergy' and with the remark I have previously quoted in relation to baptism.

"I think you will see from this that no human being converted me to the Catholic Church. After I had spent the time of leisure of my month's vacation testing the reality of my conversion in various ways, I wrote to Father B——, my late confessor, who was one of the 'seventeen' to enter the Church at the same time. Through him I had the privilege of receiving my instruction

from the chaplain of the S—— Convent. I was received into the one true Church in the convent chapel on December 23, made my first communion Easter morning in the same dear place, and was confirmed in the Cathedral on Pentecost.

"You remind me that I must not expect to find no difficulties. Our dear Lord suffered in and for His Church, and can I expect to find no thorns? Ah, no! I did not leave the Episcopal Church because it was hard. I left because God called me and showed me the living, breathing body of Christ on earth, and I could not then be content with an automaton, however skilfully constructed. But no one can see what I saw until one has been on both sides.

"I believe the day will come when all who have the grace to accept the fundamentals of Catholic faith in the Episcopal Church will embrace the whole truth in the Catholic Church. The largest proportion, by far the larger proportion, of people and clergy in the Episcopal Church are thoroughly and entirely Protestant, and when this Protestant affiliation is accomplished for which so many are working, the only logical thing for those who love the Catholic faith is to *come home.*

It seems to me that the Bishop of F—— has a vision of this. God give him grace!

"Never since July 3, the day of my conversion, have I had one scintilla of doubt, not a moment of wavering, of hesitation. I am as sure that God called me as I am that I live. Therefore, nothing of the careful and exhaustive instruction I received from the deeply spiritual and learned priest, under whose guidance it was my great privilege to be placed, seemed either strange or difficult. The 'differences' between the Anglican teaching I had received and Catholic doctrine and practice were taken up one by one, and all my innumerable questions answered to my fullest satisfaction.

"A recent convert wrote to me that I would miss the 'incomparable liturgy' of the Episcopal Church. I expected to miss, not only the Mass in English, but the hymns, etc. It is only the simple truth that I miss nothing in this ordinary sense of the word. I am perfectly satisfied and content, and this does not admit the possibility of a sense of loss."

THE BADGE OF THE SACRED HEART.

THE sunset came, like a glory, into the open windows of a pretty suburban home in West Philadelphia, and, like a mockery, enveloped with a rose-glow the form of a white-faced, middle-aged woman who stood near the waving lace curtains with a telegram crushed in her clenched hands. The stamp of agonized mother-love was on her face, and she raised her tearful eyes to the glowing sky with a cry on her lips:

"O God, let me get there in time!"

Then, with quick movements, she began preparations for the journey of hundreds of miles through the night, to the bedside of her son.

This was the telegram:

"Your son is dying. Pneumonia. Come at once. Head-nurse, City Hospital, Hamilton, Ohio."

In the City Hospital at Hamilton, two nurses with pained faces stood by the bedside of a finely-framed, handsome boy of about twenty-three, who was gasping for

breath in the throes of pneumonia. One nurse held her finger on his pulse, the other was taking his temperature. Their eyes met, and said plainer than words: "No hope!" The doctor came in again and prescribed more remedies, with the air of one determined to fight a hopeless case to the bitter end.

In the boy's ravings the words, "Mother! Mother! I am so sick!" were continually on his lips, as if the thought of her brought relief; and that mother was rushing through the night to see his dying face as fast as steam could carry her. Then came words that told his religion. He was a Catholic. The hospital was a non-Catholic institution, but all creeds were welcome.

There was one solitary Catholic nurse. She had just entered the room; she looked at the patient's chart and at the pale face on the pillow. Her practiced eye saw the lines of death, and hurrying to the head-nurse she asked if the patient had seen the priest. He had; and a load was taken from her heart. But she thought of the mother who was journeying to that bedside, and her sympathy went out to her. She knew, according to human reckoning, that she would never see him alive.

Strong in her faith, that Catholic nurse

lifted her heart to the Heart in whom we never trust in vain.

"Sacred Heart," she prayed, "I place my trust in Thee! Save him for his mother!" and going to the deathbed she took a Sacred Heart Badge from her own bosom and fastened it to the breast of the patient. No one uttered a protest; they knew that "Miss Snyder was a Catholic," and that the patient was one also.

That night she sat beside him waiting for the end. How she prayed that his mother might come! How she listened to the broken words of "poor O'Brien," and heard him mutter: "Mother! Mother!" until her heart was sore! And there was no mother near to wipe away the death-damp, to moisten those blackened, parched lips. No one but a stranger! No wonder every tender chord in her heart was touched, and her earnest prayer went up in pleading to the pitiful Heart of Christ for the poor mother who at that time was sitting, dry-eyed and tense, in the flying train that was nearing the city where her boy was dying.

Midnight came. The boy's hand groped over the coverlet, and touched the Badge of the Sacred Heart. It stayed there. Again the nurse's prayer went upwards. A few

struggles! A quiet breath! The crisis was passing. The nurse scarcely breathed. Then there was a better breath—a slight improvement; the pulse became stronger! He was gradually coming back from the grave. He would live! Thank God! Oh, the glad release from the strain! It was almost too much!

Morning came. The weary mother arrived. Her boy was alive, and she was told that he would live. She broke down and wept for joy. When she was calm she was taken to his bedside. He did not know her yet, and her heart almost broke when she saw the ravages disease had made, but he steadily improved from that time, and she never left him. When some days had passed he told her he had found the Sacred Heart Badge on his breast, and said to her:

"Sick as I was, Mother, I FELT it there."

The nurse who waited on him faithfully shook her head when the doctor said: "My man, you owe your life to this little nurse."

She was not a Catholic, but she said to Miss Snyder, who had placed the Badge on his breast: "It was not the doctor, nor was it myself, but the Sacred Heart of Christ!"

Then she procured a Badge for herself and wore it continually. To a friend of hers, who

came to the hospital for a serious operation, she loaned the sacred emblem, and when the operation was over, the patient said, on returning it:

"I cannot tell you the strange effect of this little Badge; it gave me courage. I feel as if it brought me through. Get one for me; I will pay anything for it."

The head-nurse asked for a Badge for herself and one for her mother, and both wear them constantly. Through this non-Catholic hospital the love for the Sacred Heart is spreading silently and steadily, in ways only the dear Master knows.

The happy mother departed with her convalescent boy, and the nurses, believing without knowing it in the mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, are steadily moving toward His greater love and faith. Lovers of the Sacred Heart, pray that these souls, and many more, may be gathered to the tender Bosom of the Good Shepherd.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

THE DIVINE MAGNET.

YEARS ago, in the environs of Salt Lake City, a young girl of fourteen, the daughter of Brigham Young, strolled one day near the now famous Beehive. She had seen her father from afar and noted a stranger with him. She was a bright, graceful girl, and one of her father's favorite daughters, and when he smiled and beckoned she sprang to meet him.

"This is my daughter Martha," said the so-called prophet. "And daughter, this is a Catholic priest, Father Walsh."

The priest bent his kindly eyes on the girl, and she, extending her hand looked long into his face. A quiver passed over her features; she was visibly moved at the appearance of the stranger, but she said not a word.

Dressed in his black cassock, tall and well built, with a finely-chiseled, clean-shaven face, something went forth from his countenance that thrilled the girl like an electric arrow. She bowed her head, but she never let the stranger out of her sight.

Brigham Young led the priest to the assembly of the elders, at which were gathered throngs of the people. These assemblies were then held under a grove of beautiful trees, called the "Bowery," a spot now occupied by the wonderful Tabernacle and the Temple of the Mormons. He mounted the platform where the apostles and elders of the Mormon Church were seated. There, in a few well-chosen words, he told the people that the visitor was a Catholic priest, a representative of the great Mother-Church of Christendom, and a man possessed of more than human power. The news quickly spread, and in a short time crowds of men, women and children gathered in close to hear the stranger speak.

Father Walsh made an earnest talk in which he said he had come to Utah, and particularly to Salt Lake City, to gather the few Catholics together and minister to their spiritual needs. He did not fail to improve the opportunity of explaining the rock-foundation of the Catholic Church, and her claim on the world, and ended with an exhortation to all Christians to think of their immortal souls.

Martha never took her eyes from the speaker as she sat among the young people

near the platform. Father Walsh left the place later, thanking Brigham Young for the courtesies extended, and when Martha looked up into his face as he turned to go, he placed his hand upon her head with a silent blessing.

From that moment the girl's heart yearned toward the Catholic Church. But she was carefully watched. She was fond of reading, and was given any book and every book save one that might explain or even mention the Catholic faith. The atmosphere of the Beehive repelled her. Often she stole away to St. Mary Magdalen's church for Benediction, and hiding in some remote place she would gaze with rapt wonder on the brilliantly-lighted altar and the Sacred Host enthroned there. She felt the wonderful attraction of the Blessed Sacrament.

"Oh!" she cried in her soul, "it must be God. My heart tells me so! Oh, if I could only know something about it!"

But she dared not speak. She went regularly to the Beehive and prayed, but the skies were like brass. Her soul was frozen.

The years passed by; she continued to steal to the Catholic church to pray, always dreading to be found out. In her heart she said, "Some day I will find what the Catholic

Church teaches! O Heavenly Father, bring me to the true religion!"

A graceful, attractive girl like Martha could not long be without admirers, and she was wooed and won by a good man, a Mormon, who married no other woman. After the birth of two children, her husband died. Her heart still yearned toward the Catholic faith, but she always held back from meeting those who might have assisted her in her inquiries.

Walking through the streets of Salt Lake City one day with her two little children, she saw Archbishop Allemany. Like a flash the memory of the tall stranger who had addressed her people, years ago, came back to her, and she paused and looked at the prelate with such an intense gaze that he, too, stopped and asked what he could do for her. She was well dressed, of course, and her children also. Evidently it was not a case of poverty. She blushed deeply and in her embarrassment murmured, "I am a Mormon!" The Archbishop smiled, and placing his hands on the curly heads of the children, blessed them, and raising his hat, passed on.

She continued her walk abstractedly. On her return home she felt that the crisis had come; she could no longer remain away from

the Church that was drawing her with irresistible strength to itself.

She had not lived this long without hearing harsh things and cruel things about the Catholic religion. She had heard the usual falsehoods, the stereotyped slanders, but her heart flung them to the wind. She only believed that there was an altar in that Church and Christ dwelt there. The Blessed Sacrament was the Divine Magnet that drew her soul. She resisted no longer!

She had never spoken to a Catholic since the good priest had stood beside her father, Brigham Young, and addressed the people at the beginning of his mission in Salt Lake City. She had never met a priest, never read a Catholic book, but she had heard that every one must be baptized in order to be saved.

Restless and disturbed, she took her two children to a Catholic church one day. She knelt far away from observation, praying to God to let her find the light. The pastor was inspired to speak to her. He addressed her courteously and asked her if he could serve her. In a half-frightened manner she asked if her two little children could be baptized. He invited her to the rectory, and there skilfully drew from her all the story,

wondering at the infinite goodness of God. Knowing that the Mormons did not believe in the baptism of children, he told her gently he must be assured the children would be reared Catholics. With whom could she place them? Then came the cry of her heart:

"Oh, sir! Couldn't *I* be a Catholic?"

Here was the moment of grace! God's minister seized it.

"Most certainly, my child! I will instruct you myself."

He did so. Martha, the daughter of the so-called prophet, Brigham Young, received instruction like an eager child in the doctrines of Catholicity, and with her two little children was baptized in the Holy Catholic Church. In due time she received the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, that Magnet of souls toward which her heart had been so irresistibly drawn. She lives to this day, a fervent convert, and never tires of giving praise and thanks to God who called her to Him in her innocent girlhood, and kept her desires alive, until at last, at the foot of the altar, she found peace!

"BETTER THINGS."

THE telephone rang loudly in my room.

"Well?" I asked.

"Are you Father so-and-so?"

"I am."

"This is the X—— Hotel."

"Yes?"

"My husband is very ill. Can you come to the Hotel—Room 400?"

"I will come at once."

The voice was feminine, beseeching, and full of sorrow. The hotel was one of the fine hotels of the city.

I took the holy oils and set out on my mission. I found the lady to be a refined, educated woman, a good Catholic, the wife of a Southerner high up in a railroad company. He was of no religion, but had a kind and liberal heart, a gentleman, and a most courteous one. No matter how busy he was, if some poor timid little Sister asked to see him, and begged some favor of transportation for the poor, or for the Sisters, the pass was always given, and in answer to her gratitude he would only say, "Pray for me and mine."

Needless to say the promise was fervently given. And now he was stricken, ill unto death!

"Oh! Father, he is so good and kind I cannot see him die, or let him die outside the Church!" cried his wife.

I asked her if she thought he objected in any way to her religion, if he was at all bigoted.

"On the contrary, Father. He said only yesterday that he couldn't help thinking of those good little Sisters who used to come to him for free transportation for a thousand charitable purposes—for missions of charity or mercy, and he was wondering what was in their religion that made them so self-sacrificing. He has always given me full sway in the practice of mine. I have prayed for him all our years together that he might be of the Faith before he dies. Because of these sentiments I sent for you."

"Is he worse than usual now?" I asked.

"I don't think so; I cannot give up hope. May God spare him to me!"

"Let me go to his room. Introduce me for what I am—a Catholic priest," I said.

"Let me see if he is strong enough," was her answer.

She went into the adjoining room. In a

few minutes she returned with a joyful countenance.

"He says he will be extremely pleased to see you, Father."

We entered the room of the patient—a man a little beyond middle age, with a fine, prepossessing face and a splendid head crowned with iron-gray hair. He reached out a finely-formed hand, and smiled a greeting.

"I have often met gentlemen of your cloth, Father," he said, "when I had the advantage of you. Now you have the advantage of me."

"I would be sorry to have the advantage of such a man as you are," I said, heartily. "You deserve well of every one who has ever met you."

"My wife thinks that, Father. But I never heard any one else say so on such short acquaintance."

"It isn't my profession to flatter," I said, "but it seems to me a higher Voice than either your wife's or mine has led me to you. I mean to have a chat with you as only a friend can have with a friend."

Just then, as if God's finger had moved visibly, the trained nurse entered and said the wife was wanted at the telephone. Both left the room. I was alone with the sick man, and I seized the opportunity God gave me. I

spoke boldly of his soul, of the absolute necessity of religion, of the meaning of the judgments of God. He listened, and when he spoke I felt that a miracle of grace was working in his heart, for he said simply that he had been thinking it over for a long time; he believed all the mysteries of religion; he was convinced that the Catholic Faith was the only true, logical faith. He watched his good wife, had listened to her, and he had seen those Sisters of Charity and Mercy spending their lives for the betterment of others. The motive must be sublime, founded on absolute truth.

"Father," he said, "when those little nuns looked up at me with tears of gratitude in their eyes for a simple pass on our railroad, and told me they would pray for me, I felt as if some power was protecting me and keeping me for better things. Do you know I have never been baptized in any church? I would like you to baptize me."

"Gladly will I do so," I rejoined. "Shall we wait until to-morrow? I can tell you more about our holy religion then."

"I know enough about it to want to be baptized. Do it now, Father. Call my wife. It will rejoice her heart to see me made a Catholic Christian."

As if in answer to the request, his wife entered.

"Mary, the Father is going to baptize me," he said simply.

His wife burst into tears—tears of joy. It took only a few minutes to baptize this good, straightforward, sincere man, and I never saw such peace and content on a human face as settled on his when the ceremony was over and I said good-by.

"Come to-morrow, Father. There is some more to be done," he said as I left.

How I pondered on the infinite love of God on my way back to the rectory! It was the prayers of his wife and the reward no doubt of his charity to those good Religious that obtained the grace of conversion.

But the next morning the papers had long columns about the railroad magnate who had been ill for some days at the X—— Hotel.

He had died during the night!

THE MASTER'S GOODNESS.

I HAD come from a visit to the city, where I found a young clerical friend about leaving for the West to regain his lost health. I was grieved. His zeal and usefulness were unbounded, and the few years he had spent in the ministry gave promise of an apostolate worthy of a hero of Christ. While I was with him I could not but be impressed with his cheerful optimism, which rode down all adverse appearances. He was determined to get well and return to his work. But my heart misgave me as he told me he had been chaplain to the City Pest House and the Tuberculosis Hospital.

He had labored untiringly and without a thought of danger, and with the assurance that he was taking all possible care against infection, that he was immune.

Suddenly he awoke to the fact of the approach of the insidious "white plague." Instantly his Bishop had ordered him to Colorado, where, physicians declared, he might shut off the danger and recover what he had lost. A new volunteer was appointed in his

place, and my young friend was relieved of the fear that his dear patients might be neglected.

I looked at him with dubious eyes; he was so frail and now and then a tell-tale cough was in evidence. But he had youth and hope, and with a silent prayer I encouraged him. Heroes are scarce in this selfish world! Here was surely one! Before we parted he told me one of his experiences. I could find no greater incentive to trust in the Heart of Christ than the story which fell from his lips. Let me quote the young priest's words:

"Father Alexander," he said, "I have had some strange experiences in the Pest House and Consumptives' Hospital, but this one happened only a week or two ago and is still fresh in my memory. I was called to the 'phone by one of the nurses at the Pest House. A smallpox patient, a Catholic, was very low and had not received the Sacraments.

"I instantly changed my clothes, took the usual precautions, and went to the church, where I placed the Sacred Host in my pyx and started for the hospital. When I arrived there I went to the patient, who was perfectly conscious but had every appearance of a dying man. I heard his confession, ex-

horted him to patience and resignation, and told him I would give him Holy Viaticum and then Extreme Unction. He was calm and resigned. When the table was prepared and I opened my pyx, I found to my amazement there were *two* Sacred Hosts, quite detached from each other. Now I was positive I had only taken one from the Tabernacle at home, absolutely sure of it. There was no sign of their having adhered to each other. Both were quite perfect and it seemed impossible they could have been lifted from the ciborium together.

"I was so distracted that it took me several seconds to collect myself and administer the Last Sacraments to the poor dying man. I did so, however, and when I gave the final blessing to the poor fellow he seemed to have but a few hours to live.

"But I could not overcome my mental disturbance over the presence of the second sacred Particle that remained in the pyx, and on a venture I asked the nurse if there was any other Catholic in the house.

" 'No, Father,' was the reply; 'there is no one else.'

"I turned to leave the hospital and had reached the door. As I was about passing through, the porter who opened it said:

"'Did you see the new patient who was brought in last night, Father?'

"'Why, no,' I replied. 'A Catholic?'

"'Nobody knows what he is, for he has never spoken. He doesn't look like a Catholic; he was fixed up too fine! He isn't a poor man, that's sure,' and the man smiled.

"I was about to go on when some impulse arrested me.

"'I'll see about him,' I said in a low tone, for I carried the sacred pyx.

"I went to the office and inquired, learning that a strange man, a gentleman by his dress, was brought there quite insensible. He had been picked up in the street, and the lookers-on, judging from his inflamed face, thought he was intoxicated. An examination by medical experts at the police station proved that it was a case of smallpox, with high fever. At once he was hustled into the Pest House ambulance and hurried off. He had a valuable watch and a diamond pin, plenty of money and his clothes were of the best material, but there were no papers—nothing that could identify him. He had not spoken or unclosed his eyes since he came.

"'And, Father,' said the office man, 'they say he is an awful sight. You would not know

whether he is a white man or a negro. It is the worst form of black smallpox!'

"'I must see him,' I said.

"'I don't think there is much use,' said the clerk. 'No one knows anything about him, and as he is entirely unconscious you can't give him religious rites, for there is no mark of religion about him!'

"The impulse within me was too strong to resist.

"'I want to see him,' I persisted.

"'All right, Father; just as you say!' and he led the way down the corridor, with its pungent smell of iodoform, and pointed to a closed door. 'In there, Father.'

"I knew the place. It led to a room where hopeless cases lay, never again to see the outside world. I opened the door of the passage and found the room. The door was ajar. The light was dim, but I could see that the man was alone. He was breathing heavily. The nurse was pacing the hallway.

"The patient was indeed a terrible sight! His face was so swollen that it was hardly human and in the dim light would not be recognized by his closest friend. I stood beside the bed. There was no sign of life save that heavy breathing.

"'My friend,' I said in a distinct voice, 'I am a Catholic priest. Are you a Catholic?'

"With a quick flutter the eyelids moved. There was a flash of intelligence and they dropped shut. Just then the orderly entered, saying respectfully:

"'Father, he is unconscious. He will die in this stupor. The doctors say there is not the slightest hope!' I motioned him away.

"'My dear friend,' I said to the patient, 'I think you are conscious. If you understand me, and wish to go to confession and Holy Communion, I have the Blessed Sacrament with me. Let me know by pressing my hand,' and I took the swollen hand in mine. Instantly I felt a strong pressure. I turned to the orderly.

"'The man is speechless, but he is conscious,' I said, 'and I mean to hear his confession. Stay outside until I call you.'

"The orderly gave me an incredulous look, but obeyed and closed the door. I began by telling the poor sufferer that I would make his confession and he must press my hand. It was touching and almost drew tears from my eyes, the effort he made to respond. I was perfectly satisfied. When I told him I had Our Lord with me, he tried to extend his poor swollen tongue to prove to me his

desire to receive Holy Communion, and when I gave him the Blessed Sacrament, a great tear rolled down his face. There was a glass of water near, and I assisted him, with spoonfuls, to swallow the Sacred Particle. When he did so I anointed him, scarcely finding a healthy spot for the holy oil.

"All this time his eyes spoke the most pitiful language ever seen in a human face.

"My feelings almost overcame me. I never thought of contagion. I gave every consolation of the Church to this poor, speechless, disfigured Christian, and left with the conviction that another soul would soon be in paradise. I knew now the destination of the second sacred Host, so strangely placed in my pyx. When I returned to the rectory I changed my clothes and bathed, while my mind still ran on the strange circumstance.

"Next day the telephone rang about noon. It was from the Pest House.

" 'Father,' said the office man. 'I thought you would like to hear about the stranger you saw yesterday. He was a respectable man —a man of property from A——. His friends were almost crazy when they heard he was here. He was a good Catholic and went to his duty every week. They said he often told them he prayed every day he might not

die without the priest. When they found out that you were with him, they wept with gratitude. He died an hour after you left. The remains were sealed in a lead casket and they sent a special hearse for them just now. I thought you would like to know about it,' said the clerk.

"'Thank you,' I said, 'and what about the man I was sent for?'

"'Oh, he is better. He will get well,' was the reply.

"I hung up the receiver. How strange it seemed! That good man, lying helpless, speechless and unknown, dying of a dread disease, and yet passing into eternity with all the helps of holy Church! The Sacraments administered by a priest, who did not know of his existence until the marvelous and puzzling appearance of a second Host in his pyx impelled him to seek him out.

"Oh, Heart of Christ, how could we fail to trust in Thee!"

* * * * *

The young priest paused. We were both touched. I grasped his hand.

"God-speed your journey," I murmured. "Come back well. We need you!"

THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

PASSING through the long lines of beds in a western hospital I found an intelligent looking man of middle age lying on one of them. I had been on a sick call, and was about to leave, but before doing so I generally look about to see if any other patient needs a priest. Unfortunately, sometimes they have not the grace or the courage to ask for one. The face of this stranger attracted me. I asked a nurse who he was.

"A Protestant preacher, sir," said he. "He has come down pretty low when he has to be taken to a ward in a City Hospital!"

"Where does he belong?" said I.

"Somewhere out West. But he has a few friends. They bring him magazines and books."

When I returned to the ward I went to the stranger, and saluted him pleasantly.

"I suppose you know I am a Catholic priest," said I, "but I always like to say a

friendly word to those who are suffering, even if they are not Catholics."

"I am not a Catholic," said he.

"I know that," said I. "But we are both ministers of the Gospel, and in that way we are not strangers!"

He drifted at once to other topics, spoke fluently and well of the events of the day, and showed such an intelligent grasp of affairs in general and particular, that I felt quite interested in him and said so.

"It isn't often one meets a man like you in a hospital ward! I have been very agreeably surprised. I sincerely hope you will soon recover. May I call to see you again?"

"If you wish," said he. "I have not many friends. Life is made up of many bitter things—such, at least, has been my experience, but pray for me!"

I left. As I pressed his hand I said, "Trust in God! He is our best friend—and never forsakes us. You know that. Good-by!"

I went again to the hospital. My friend seemed worse each time. He was seized with dreadful shivering fits. He trembled from head to foot. The very bed shook. It was distressing to look at him. I could not get him out of my mind. One day, going to see him, I met a man at the hospital gate.

"You seem interested in Mr. P——," said he.

"The Protestant minister?" said I. "Yes. He is such an intelligent man! I feel quite sorry he grows worse!"

"Protestant minister!" he ejaculated. "Why, he's only a renegade Catholic, who went West, lived wild, and turned to preaching eventually for a living! He thinks nobody knows him here, but in his younger days he was a fairly good Catholic. He hasn't long to live, poor fellow. I go there to see a friend of mine, and he knows I know him!"

I didn't say a word, but hurried to the ward. The poor man was in one of his terrible nervous fits, shaking as if he had an uncontrollable chill. The perspiration was standing out on his forehead and rolling on the pillow. The shadow of death was on his face. I sat down on the chair close beside him, and taking his clammy hand, I said:

"My friend, you are going to die, and you know I am a priest. You, too, are a Catholic. I want you to make your confession. I will help you all I can," and I took my stole out of my pocket.

He looked at me despairingly. Then he turned his face away.

"What!" said I, "you are going to refuse this last grace?"

"Father," said he, "there is no salvation for me. I have been a traitor of the deepest dye. I have disgraced my family. I have broken my mother's heart. I have left the Church of my childhood and railed against it in public and private. I have been blacker than Judas, because I have betrayed all that I loved with greater knowledge and with bitter malice." And just then another one of those uncontrollable chills seized him, and lest he injure himself some of the orderlies came over and held him down.

When he became quiet, I spoke to him calmly and soothingly. His frank acknowledgment had all the effect of confession on his soul. It broke through the rigid barriers of pride and despair. It was enough. I saw my opportunity and I availed myself of it with all the tact I possessed. The result was that he poured out his soul in a flood of humble and unreserved confession. It was like the rushing of many waters, and when it was gone it left his soul purified from all stains and in peace. A sweet holy calm seemed to possess him. He lay there as a sleeping babe might. While I administered the sacred unction, great tears rolled down his cheeks, and

when I was through and was placing my stole and oil-stock in my pocket, he opened wide his eyes and with a look of ineffable joy and confidence he said:

"God *is* good. No truer word did you ever utter, Father, than when you said He was our best friend."

I warmly pressed his hand and turned to go. As I looked around I saw the burly negro orderly, who with difficulty had held the sick man's feet a half hour before, leaning on his mop, silently and reverently watching the whole proceeding; for it was in the open ward. I took my departure, promising to return next day, and on my way home marvelled at the goodness and mercy of God, who had sought out this wandering sheep and brought him back to the pastures he had deserted. I went back early next morning, but the weary stranger had gone to his rest, the prodigal had found his Father. Death had come in the night.

As I glanced at the empty bed, I saw a crippled, merry-hearted Irishman beckoning me to his corner.

"Father, ye did a good work for that poor fellow," said he. "He died in peace and quietness, and I think happy, and thankful to the Almighty. But the black man ye saw

moppin' up the flure said it was the 'pow'rful little cotton-plasters' ye put on his hands and feet that quieted him down, and gave him the happy death. Maybe, Father dear, you'll have his soul on the strength of them same 'plasters'!"

"True to the sunny Isle you came from, Patrick," thought I, "mingling a joke with the keenest suffering!"

HER RECOMPENSE.

THE sunshine shone brightly one morning into a great hospital ward in the city of St. Louis. Weary sufferers raised their heads from their pillows, and eyes dim with pain grew bright as they watched it gild the white beds. It crept over little tables, where here and there a vase of flowers bloomed, and over the pillows, where sufferers, too ill to note it, lay silent with closed eyes.

There were beds, too, with screens around them, which meant that the long, last journey was close at hand, but the sunshine gilded them too, though the occupants noted it not! Nurses in pure white uniforms glided noiselessly here and there, doctors went gravely from bed to bed, giving hope and comfort to many hearts. The sunshine flooded all and made the sad scene less sad, less painful.

There were nuns there, too, with chastened faces and tender touch, with gentle voices and kind eyes, and weary lips smiled when they stood at their bedsides. There was one of them now standing at the pillow of a pale

invalid, wiping the sweat of agony from her forehead and holding a little crucifix to her willing lips every now and then. She was not dying, unless you call such agony for fifteen years a constant death. These were but paroxysms of torture from her crippled spine, which came and went and left her helpless.

"Poor Bessie," said the nun. "It is so hard to see you suffer and not be able to relieve you, unless you want the hypodermic."

"No, Sister, no! Am I not expiating for poor Charlie! Poor boy! If he only knew!" said the invalid, whose face was resuming its normal expression now that the convulsion was over.

"If he only knew!" murmured the nun compassionately; and she held a restorative to the white lips of the patient, smoothed her pillows, and bathed her forehead and wrists.

"Sister," said Bessie, "I suffered this way nearly all night. Something seemed to say, 'Take courage, God will not forsake your poor brother!' I bore it all, offered it all to my Saviour on the cross for poor Charlie."

"Blessed are they who suffer and hope, Bessie," said the Sister, softly. "You have been with us for fifteen years, and your one

thought has been of that unworthy, reckless brother. His conversion will surely be your reward. God will not let such faith and patience go without recompense."

"Don't call him unworthy and reckless, Sister. He never meant to be either. When he was a little, curly-headed fellow he used to get into every kind of mischief, but he always came to me. I can see his black eyes flashing with temper, and hear him saying: 'Bess, you're the only friend a poor kid has. If they don't stop naggin' me, I'll run off. But I'll never forget *you*, Bessie.' They were hard on him, Sister—father and mother were—and he *did* run off, and once in a while he'd write a letter on the sly and tell me where to answer. I used to beg him not to forget his night prayers at least, and to go to Mass, but then I got this fall and was *crippled*, and he never wrote but once after—only once in these fifteen years. He said he didn't believe in religion any more. That church and praying were for women, and he'd leave me to do his share. Then, Sister, I promised God I would suffer all the agony of this awful back and never murmur if He would bring Charlie around. Since I have been in this blessed place it has been easier. He is never a minute out of my mind."

"How many rosaries do you say a day for him, Bessie, besides all the suffering?"

"Well, Sister, as I have nothing else to do I say the fifteen decades twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon, and a few other little prayers between the pains."

"God bless you, dear," said the nun. "Keep on suffering and praying. Put me in your prayers too, Bessie—I need them."

"Is it you?" said Bessie, incredulously. "Never a prayer do you need. Taking care of all of us, and of the like of *me,* from year's end to year's end. You'll go right up, Sister," and she tried to motion with her twisted hand and arm toward the blue sky.

The nun laughed softly; then straightening the covers and giving a pressure to the hand that held the worn rosary, she went on her round of duty.

Poor Bessie had indeed suffered and prayed for fifteen years. She offered it all for Charlie, her wild and only brother, who had drifted from the Church and was some place in the wide world—Bessie knew not where. But the marvellous faith of the poor cripple was so vivid that every one was interested in her, and her piety, patience and resignation made every one love her.

She had a remarkably sweet face and a

soft, winning voice, and the doctors and nurses who succeeded each other year after year looked on her as a prodigy, and did everything skill and science could suggest, even though unavailing, to help her condition. She never murmured when they told her after an unsuccessful operation or an agonizing examination that nothing could be done. She only smiled and said: "Well, I don't mind; I'll suffer for poor Charlie."

Those fifteen years of torture were *an apostolate for one, single soul.* A daily sermon was preached from that hospital cot, which was a silent but powerful incentive to many a discouraged heart to keep on without wearying. The Sisters felt Bessie's good influence in the hospital. Because she was incurable and without money or friends, they took tender care of her, and she loved them with all her soul.

One day the superior came to me with a paper in her hand.

"Father Alexander," she said, "I wonder if this could be Bessie's brother? It is a Pittsburg paper that has found its way somehow to St. Louis, and here is an account of an accident case—a man whose name is given as Charles Horton. He was taken to Southside Hospital. The name struck me.

Charles Horton! Would it be worth while to inquire?"

"It certainly would," was my reply. I thought a minute and said: "Suppose you write to the Sisters in Pittsburg. They visit the hospitals and would make inquiries. If good is to be effected we must go about it quietly."

Her letter went that day, giving an account of Bessie, and asking the superior to ascertain if the man had a sister, also what his sentiments were. Nothing was to be said to Bessie till information was obtained. Nearly two weeks elapsed. We were giving up hope and were glad Bessie knew nothing about it, when the superior came to me. I knew by her face that there was news.

"Here is the reply to that letter, Father Alexander. Let us tell Bessie at once. I will do so, while you read the letter. It is quite a document."

She departed. I learned from the letter that the Sisters in Pittsburg had gone at once to the Southside Hospital, a non-Catholic institution, and were received very kindly. They found that a man by the name of Charles Horton was there. When told that two Sisters of Mercy were inquiring for him, he was extremely unwilling to see

them, and only after much urging consented to have them enter his room.

He was weak and miserable, and evidently not far from the end, but his manner was barely civil. He declared that he was not a Catholic, and seemed so ill at ease that it was distressing to talk to him. Finally the Sister spoke of the letter from St. Louis, asking him if he had not a sister there. Instantly his face changed, and he held out his hand.

"Yes, oh, yes, I have! How do you know? Is she well?"

"She is praying for you, searching the world for one word about you. She loves you as much to-day as when you were a curly-headed little fellow, telling her your troubles."

The hard face softened more.

"Yes," he said, "that's Bessie. That's just like Bessie! How she would hurry here if she knew!"

"But she cannot come. Don't you know that she hurt her back fifteen years ago, and has been crippled ever since? Don't you know that she cannot move out of bed, but suffers terrible agony of the nerves and muscles? And don't you know that she lies there, sweet and patient, offering it all for 'Charlie,'

begging the Lord to bring him back to the Church of his boyhood?"

"She suffers?" said the man: "God help me! She was the most innocent girl that ever lived! She has been suffering fifteen years—for *me?* O, Bessie, my little sister!" said the poor fellow, tears rushing to his eyes.

The nun soothed him.

"Because she loves you so much she has begged God not to let her die, but to increase her pains, that your faults might be expiated and you brought back to the Church."

"Faults!" he cried. "Sister, they are *crimes!* I have been committing crimes for twenty years! I have led a wild life! I have never thought of God except to curse His name! But now—now I feel as if my heart is broken. Can I see a priest?"

"Indeed you can," said the nun. "But oh, how you should thank this dear sister for this grace. Be comforted. We will send a priest here at once. Let me place this Sacred Heart badge upon you. We will go home to our convent. All the Sisters will pray for you—and, poor fellow, we will write to Bessie."

He held the Sister's hand as she rose to go after a fervent prayer at his bedside. Then promising to return next day, the Sisters left. Before leaving the hospital they telephoned

one of the Fathers of a neighboring monastery.

Later that evening the convent telephone rang. It was the Father who had gone to the hospital. He wished to tell the Sisters that poor Charlie was a most sincere penitent, that he had made his confession, received the Sacraments, and was prepared for and resigned to death. He begged the Father to ask the nuns to return. There was joy in heaven and earth that night over the sinner's return to God.

Early next morning the Sisters went to the hospital. Charlie was still living, but fast approaching the dark river whence those who embark never return. He smiled faintly, laying his hand on the little badge of the Sacred Heart.

"Tell Bessie it was her prayers," he whispered. "Tell her I felt that she was praying for me. I die happy, a penitent Catholic."

The Sister gave him her crucifix; he looked long at it, held it tightly. After the prayers for the dying were said the Sisters returned home to pray.

At noon came the message from the priest who attended him:

"Charlie died at eleven o'clock. I was with him and gave him the last absolution. He

was conscious, and said to me, 'It was Bessie's prayers. Tell her I died happy.'"

* * * * *

I found myself so absorbed in the closely written pages of this long letter, that when the superior came into the room I did not hear her.

"Father Alexander, Bessie knows. I told her what was in the letter, and she is as radiant as an angel. Won't you go to her, Father? She wept with joy and excitement, but she is calm now."

I went to Bessie's bedside. It was true. Her face was angelic, her soft, dark eyes were full of heavenly light, her delicate face was rosy with joy. I never saw a countenance more beautiful—she seemed rather of heaven than of earth.

"Oh, Father Alexander!" she cried; "God has been so good to me! Charlie has come back! We will both be home together. Oh," she said solemnly, "I have nothing more to do now; I hope I'll go home soon. Bring Our Lord to me and anoint me."

I was startled, but I would not show it. I said:

"You are excited, Bessie; you must wait God's will. He has indeed been good to you. Won't you stay with us and offer your thanksgiving to Him?"

"I cannot," she said. "My mission is ended. My heart longs to see my Lord and tell Him my gratitude."

"Well, then, Bessie, to-morrow morning I will bring Our Lord to you, and if you are worse I will anoint you."

"Thank you, Father," she said, simply.

I went on my round of duty, but try as I might, I could not keep my thoughts away from Bessie. They told me her sufferings that night were excruciating. She bore them with sweetness, almost with joy. Now and then she would say with a sigh, "Will morning soon be here? Our Lord is coming!"

It was Sunday morning. I went early to her bedside. There was no mistake now—Bessie was dying. Her face was white as marble, and her pinched features told of her sufferings. A table was ready. Some of the nuns and more of the patients knelt there, while I gave her Holy Viaticum and anointed her. When I was leaving she tried to clasp her poor little twisted hands together, and whispered, "Come back, Father; it won't be long now." I went back as soon as possible. She was sinking rapidly, but the pinched features had disappeared, and her face glowed as it did when the news of her brother's conversion first reached her.

Every one was impressed by the beauty of her countenance, and yet death was upon it, too. I read the solemn prayers of the Church, so majestic and so consoling. As I paused I heard her say, softly: "Only fifteen years! So short a time for such a great reward!"

In an instant that long stretch of days and nights came before me, with their torture and their weariness, and I felt something rising in my throat which threatened to choke my utterance: "Only" fifteen years. *"Only!"*

She was dying now. Her eyes closed, and as the last faint gasps succeeded each other, the silence was intense. Suddenly her eyes opened wide and a beautiful smile passed over her face. It faded into marble white. I raised my hand in absolution and then, and as if it were so ordained, it seemed as if every church bell in the city began to ring. Sweet, loud and strong the Sunday chimes pealed forth. The effect was electrical. It was like a pæan of triumph.

Bessie was dead! Her apostolate *for one single soul* was over. Sister and brother were with God.

I shall never forget the beauty of that death-bed.

"HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN."

IT WAS the Christmas time of 1910. High up in the mountains of Western Pennsylvania, a little mining town called Whitney nestled among the hills. The miners and their families lived poor and simple lives from year to year. In the early morning the hardworking father and brothers took their frugal breakfast, and with their tin buckets and little lamps on their caps, made their way to the shaft, and went down deep, deep into the bowels of the earth, there to dig and delve all day for the dusky diamonds that glitter in our grates and warm our homes. In the evening, black and sooty, and covered with coal dust, these tired men emerged from the living darkness to go to their homes for a well-earned rest from toil. Some of them took the night-turn. It made little difference when they went down into the shaft, but it was more fatiguing and perhaps more dangerous to work at night. The faculties, maybe, are not so keen, the grip on pick and shovel less firm.

It was only a week after Christmas when

the good pastor of this little village, who had taken care of the happiness and spiritual needs of his flock, drew breath after the fatigues of the strenuous Christmas and New Years' celebrations. The children had been made happy by simple gifts, their elders had flocked to the little church; the evergreens still hung about the altar. The pastor was thinking of these things one early morning after Mass and breakfast, as he slowly drove his horse and buggy along the snow-covered road. The hills were bleak, the fields white and frosty. Not a creature was visible. The horse suddenly turned into a path not often used by the pastor in his journeyings. He did not check him. Suddenly there loomed up before him a wagon moving slowly. Something about it arrested the priest's attention. He drove faster, and soon came up with it. It was covered with heavy black oil-cloth, and the priest recognized the ambulance of the mines.

He alighted from his buggy and called to the driver.

"Any one in there?" he said, pointing to the ambulance.

"Why, yes, there's a man we are carrying to the Latrobe Hospital," answered the driver.

"What happened?" said the priest.

"Got his legs crushed in the mines last night—but he'll be all right when we get him there. They'll fix him up!"

"I'll just look in at him," said the priest, and as the driver did not seem anxious to stop or delay, the priest tied his horse to the ambulance and let it follow, while he went inside to the patient.

A man was lying on a stretcher, seemingly in great pain. The Father recognized one of his parishioners.

"Thank God, Father," he said. "I am glad to see you. I'm hurt bad."

And he was, poor fellow!

At once the priest urged him to go to confession so that even if he were "fixed up" at the hospital, it would be comforting for him to feel he had made his peace with God.

In low whispers the consoling Sacrament of Penance was administered, while the mine-doctor and the driver sat in front, and the ambulance drove slowly down the snowy road. The priest gave absolution, said a few encouraging words, told how the Child of Bethlehem had come on earth to redeem His own this Christmas-tide; and left him with his blessing, and with the promise to visit him at the hospital.

Then with kindly greeting, he left the ambulance, got into his buggy, and went his way —pondering on the mercy of God, the tenderness of the blessed Saviour who had sent him this early morn, in the Christmas tide, to comfort and aid a poor crushed human creature, one of His own whom He had come to redeem.

The ambulance went on its rough way, along the weary road to the hospital. When it arrived there, the doctor and the driver went to lift out the poor patient and take him to the little cot prepared for him.

The man was dead.

INSPIRATIONS.

"FATHER ALEXANDER," said a gray-haired missionary to me one day. "You are getting to be a famous story-teller. Why don't you tell the brethren the value of Inspirations? The mistake of putting aside a desire to do something that has just come into the mind, because it is not in the usual routine, or because it may inconvenience the person to whom it is suggested. Some act of supererogation, so to say. Now, there is an idea to write about!"

"But, Father," I ventured, "I don't think I catch your meaning!"

"If I illustrated it by personal experience, would you take it up?"

"I would, indeed," I said warmly. This was a priest who had grown gray in the mission field—one whom I venerated as a saint.

"Well, I'll tell you," said he, leaning back, and folding his hands thoughtfully. "About two weeks ago I was sitting in my room writing. It faced a noisy street. All day long, trolley cars, wagons, carts, and people passed

by in a continuous stream. I rarely went to the window. I wrote at my table, and I said my Breviary walking up and down. The city noises had ceased to be a distraction to me, and my prayers were as fervent as when I was in church. That afternoon I was writing a letter and had come to a stop; suddenly a thought came to me: Go to the window! I hesitated a moment. It was not my wont to appear at the window, but the thought urged me: Go at once!

"I sprang to my feet, and went to the window. I saw a crowd. A trolley car had stopped in front of our door. Mutterings were heard like summer thunder far away, and I saw dozens of men trying to hoist the wheels from a crushed human form. The car had been emptied, and they succeeded. When the white face of the man appeared, instinctively I snatched my stole that was on a chair and, raising my hand, gave him conditional absolution, and (if he were a Catholic), the plenary indulgence *in articulo mortis*. It was the work of a minute or two. Then I saw men lifting him up, and carrying him directly to our door. I rushed downstairs. The door had been opened, and the poor man lay on the floor in the vestibule while the morbid crowd was shut out.

"They made way for me, but all was over. He was dead. The car wheels had gone over his breast. I looked at him. He was one of my own parishioners—a good man, who had been to confession to me only a week before. 'Father,' said one of the men who carried him, 'he was breathing when the car wheel was lifted!'

" 'Yes,' said another, 'he breathed while we were carrying him in here. It was the nearest place and he is a Catholic.'

" 'He is one of my penitents,' I said, 'and he is safe with God. May his soul rest in peace!'

" 'Amen,' said they all, with their hats removed.

"Then came the doctor, the coroner, the friends; and all the attendant confusion. He cared little, the poor, crushed being, who had, through God's inspiration I verily believe, received the last absolution and plenary indulgence. Had I waited, had I neglected the inward voice, it would have been too late."

I said nothing, but my thoughts were busy. He went on.

"Sometimes, after lunch, I pass through the sacristy, making a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Often I am tired, and want to go immediately to my room to rest. The

thought comes often: Look out in the church. I dare not 'down that thought' with the excuse: 'If any one is at that box, he has come out of hours and doesn't deserve to be heard.' *I'm afraid to say that.* I go and look out in the church. Sometimes I see a form shrinking into a pew at the door of the confessional. I go down and find a strayed sheep, man or woman, who has not been to the Sacraments for ten, fifteen, twenty-five years. Ah! my daily prayer is: From the neglect of Thy holy inspirations, deliver me, O Lord! I never put them aside."

"Father, do you think inspirations like that come to every one in the ministry?"

"I certainly do, until the spirit of God is unheeded, and then the opportunity to save souls is taken away, and given to another. Never neglect the quick impulse to do a certain good thing that is in line with your work. Be habitually in humble readiness for God's work, and God's work will always come to you. It is lying around everywhere." And here the gentle old man smiled.

We were both silent, for a few minutes, when he suddenly started:

"Do you know I think somebody wants me now?"

"Hardly," I said, "at the unusual hour

of 11:30 in the morning. Every one is thinking of luncheon."

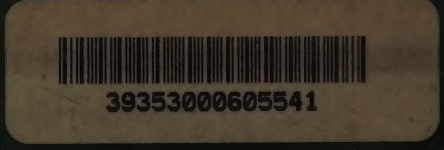
"I'll go and see," he simply said.

I was his guest. I arose and followed him downstairs into the sacristy, and as he walked down the aisle to his confessional, I saw a figure crouching in a pew. The priest entered the confessional; the figure did the same. I knelt at the foot of the altar, marveling, and praying that the inspirations of God might never find a closed door in my heart.

When I met him an hour afterward, at luncheon, he said: "Write up that talk we had this morning, Father Alexander; I had another proof just now that the voice of inspiration is ever with us priests if we only follow its whisperings."

I have written up the talk. I pray God that it may bear fruit. The opening of the New Year is a good time to begin.

JULY.69
N. MANCHESTER,
INDIANA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